

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Becoming University Academics From Professional Practice: Finding, Learning, Playing

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*Becoming University Academics
From Professional Practice:
Finding, Learning, Playing*

By

Louise Wilson

PhD

July 2022



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From Professional Practice:
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*A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the University's requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy*

Ethics Approval Sheet (P13808)

REGISTRY RESEARCH UNIT

ETHICS REVIEW FEEDBACK FORM

(Review feedback should be completed within 10 working days)

Name of applicant: Louise Wilson

Faculty/School/Department: [Human Resources] Staff Development

Research project title: PhD Thesis - From Practitioner to University Lecturer

Comments by the reviewer

Evaluation of the ethics of the proposal:

Detailed consideration of the ethics of the proposal are provided.

My only additional point for consideration would be that as the professional role of the researcher is the Course Director of the mandatory course for new academic staff, there is a potential that the Coventry participants could be enrolled on the applicants course. If this is the case, then the information to participants needs to include details that participant will not influence their study.

Evaluation of the participant information sheet and consent form:

The PIS and consent form are details and clear. However if the participants are enrolled on the researchers course there needs to be information to make it clear that participation in the research will not influence /impact on their study.

Recommendation:

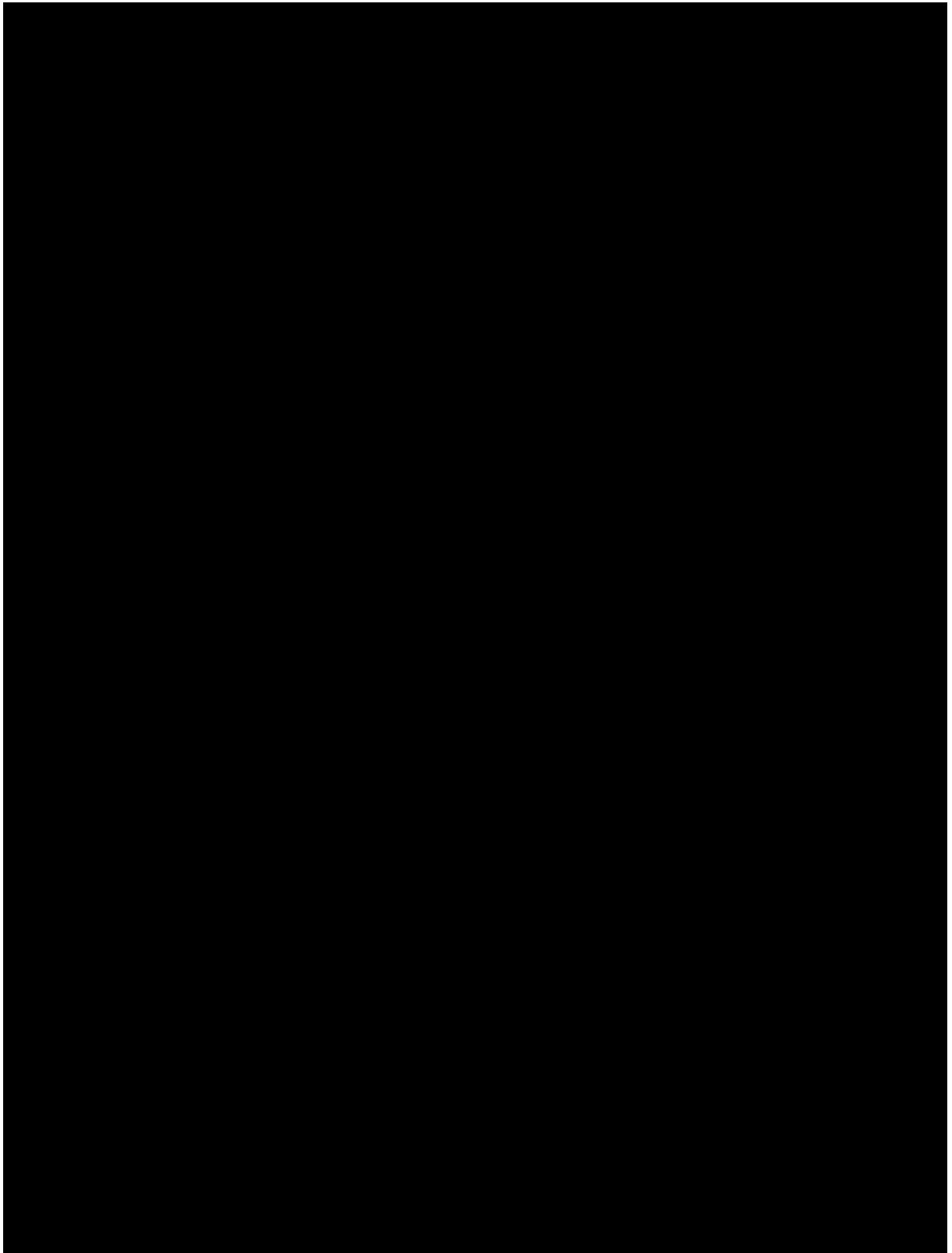
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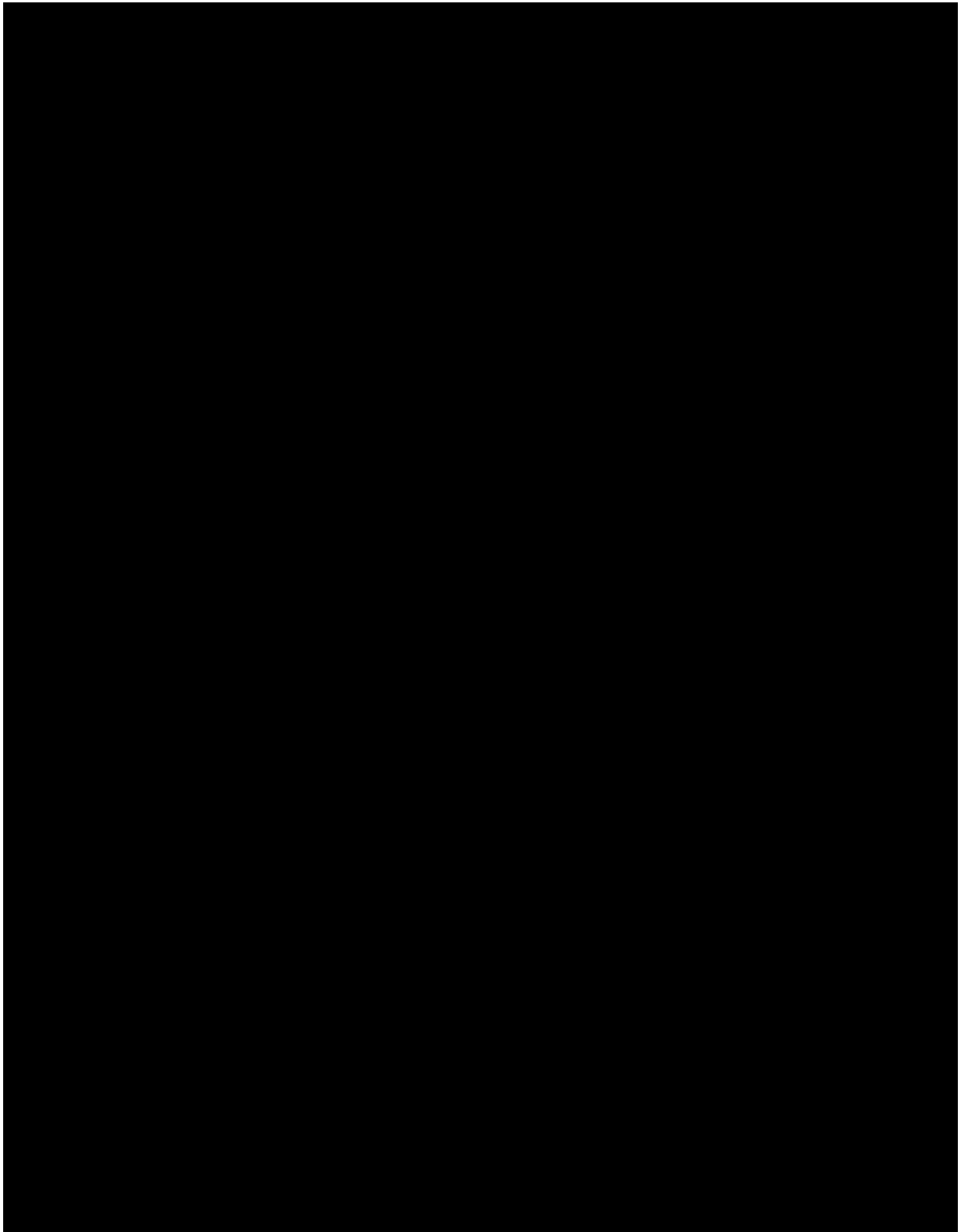
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Date: 06/06/2013

Submission Declaration





*To my mother Christina (2021) in loving memory,
my husband Ian, and my aunt Bernadette.*

*Croí álainn: Las mo shlí
(Beautiful hearts: Light my way)*

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Abstract

The transition from professional practitioner to university academic is well-documented in the areas of nursing, healthcare, sociology, and law. However, little is known about the experience of practitioners making the transition from other professions and this study investigates the collective experiences of those from a wider range of professional backgrounds who have also made this transition from professional life and professional careers to academic life and academic careers. This study explored the experience of twenty-three professional practitioners drawn from eight professional backgrounds across four post-1992 institutions. All became university academics during the last five years. Adopting the concept of transition, specifically transition cycles, as part of the conceptual framework, the participants' experiences were explored using a Narrative methodology to study the experience of transition.

Building on, combining, and expanding the transitional cycles provided by Nicholson (1990), Williams (1999) and Bridges (2009), a prior transitional stage was identified as part of the early transitional process. From findings, a new model, termed here as the Early-Transition Cycle (ETC) was located and broadly categorised as having three phases: *Finding, Learning* and *Playing*. Recognising that the experience of transition from practice to academic life was found to be complex, varied, and individual, this study concludes with recommendations to support the transition of university academics from practice by improving preparation, academic induction, on-boarding and addressing areas relating to career progression routes and the promotion of a better understanding of how to develop academic careers. Raising the awareness of the importance of transition is key and it is proposed that the ETC developed in this thesis provides a useful tool to help achieve this.

The argument underpinning this study is that the conventional journey into an academic career is via the research route: undertaking a PhD and often post-doctoral research before securing a lecturing position. Implicitly if not always explicitly, this is the assumed

default journey which underpins academic life and career progression. Entering higher education from professional practice is less common. If universities are to fully benefit from the expertise that practitioners bring, and they in turn are to achieve their career potential, universities need to recognise and support their specific needs and requirements.

Part I – Framing the Study: Concepts and Theories

Part I

Chapter 1 - Introducing the Study

‘Nothing ever becomes real ‘till it is experienced”

– *John Keats* -

1.0 Introduction

The transitional journey from practice to becoming a university lecturer has previously been researched in the professional fields of nursing, healthcare, sociology, and law. However, to date, no specific model has been developed which helps us to understand the experience and how it evolves when working as part of the academic community. The experience of transition is an under-researched area.

This study seeks to understand the experience of transition through the stories of new academics who have already become university academics by taking the 'professional route' (Boden, Epstein, and Kenway 2005:27) to transition to academic life and work. This focus enables the study here to gain an appreciation of the problems, systems of integration, complexities, and challenges to develop recommendations designed to support successful transitions from the start, and as the experience progresses.

This chapter acts as the starting point for this thesis by explaining the importance of this research, why it was worth doing, what we learn from it and why it is worth knowing about (Silverman 2005:140). I aim to equip readers with the information they 'need to know' (Dunleavy 2003:60) to gain an early appreciation of this research study and its timeliness.

1.1 Introducing the Research: Context and Issues

This thesis reports on research designed to understand the experience of transition to become university academics from professional practice. Here research from the field of academic development and higher education is presented. But, since prior research in UK higher education literature relating to the topic was found limited, the relevant literature from complementary fields including human resource management, organisation development, transition psychology, and leadership are drawn upon. The scope was the first five years in post because this timeframe was known as significant for newcomers entering higher education workplaces and for other 'early-career academics' (Mckay and Monk 2017:223) who may be progressing directly from doctoral or other studies.

My position in relation to this study is like that of the participants because I made the transition to become a university academic by moving from the professional field to work in the field of higher education. For me this move happened over seventeen years ago after spending twenty plus years in professional practice. I am an ex-practitioner who as an Assistant Professor works in the field of academic development at a post-92 university. As an educator and researcher, I am part of the community of qualitative researchers and a social realist who tends to take a pragmatic view to the way inquiries are viewed. I began this study conscious that I held a research interest in the development of early-career academics. A topic that I became more curious about during the years I led the university's Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice for new academic staff. A programme of study that provided new starters with a license to teach and practice. This academic work led me to observe transitional experiences occurring and to hear various stories about becoming lecturers in higher education.

I wanted to explore more about the experience of transition from their perspectives and direct experiences, specifically from the perspective of professional practitioners who were moving to academic life and work from an alternative career. I began this study conscious that my experience of transition was limited to my own journey, personal experiences, and academic practice. It was a time in higher education when teaching began to rise up the agenda as the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) was discussed and then introduced. A time when students expected more from their education and wanted professional careers after graduating having invested time, money, and effort. These students, those practitioners came to teach, sought high-quality academic learning experiences from institutions and academic staff alike. Making a successful transition from professional life to academic life, as I saw it, was important especially as the landscape of higher education continued to alter and reshape.

There are different types of universities and here I chose to focus only on the sector I knew as a place of work and study, post '92 universities. I was comfortable with this sector and valued the contribution they made to prepare students for professional life and to reproduce future generations of practitioners. These institutions are

characterised here as new universities and recognised as former polytechnics who were not initially established for research and scholarly activity, but this changed. Post-92's have a 'strong tradition in education for a variety of professionals and industry and commerce' (Henkel 2000:268), the more vocational, professional, and work-based programmes. Another feature relates to the types of employment contracts such as 'teaching only'. In this study, the professional practitioners are engaged on permanent academic contracts not 'teaching only' as part of their transition into the academic workplace.

The study connects with prior work related to transition theory, models and cycles associated with career changes. I recognise that the experience of transition and making a successful transition to academic life via the 'professional route' (Boden, Epstein and Kenway 2005:27) has issues or risks. These include:

- Not enough is known about this particular sub-group of the academic community or their experience of transition to university academic beyond the initial stages of becoming teachers or lecturers within a few discipline areas.
- University systems supporting transition, and the evolving transitional journey, are geared more towards the conventional avenues associated with research routes and linked to institutional support related to induction, mentoring and career progression which are varied and, at times, misfitting.
- The risks of not getting transition right are many and include; new staff leaving, costs of recruitment, reputation, students' perception, retaining staff longer-term, efficient knowledge-transfer, lost knowledge between generations, demotivation, disillusionment, career or personal risks, and newcomers copying what they believe is expected and valued rather than what the institution requires or what they need personally for success in another career and in academic life.

- University academics from practice and the existing academic community are not being joined as well as they could be to form a cohesive team to deliver quality higher education.
- Management preparedness for coaching, mentoring, training, understanding, and guiding new university academics is connected to their own experiences, entry routes and preparedness to manage a group of diverse experts from different career backgrounds to their own.

This research was undertaken to understand the experience of transition from the perspectives of practitioners and to utilise findings to suggest enhancements to address the issues, and risks, identified within the transitional process.

This study explores the experience of transition considering transition theory and models related to major life events. Nicholson's (1990) 'The Transition Cycle, Associated Tasks, Problems and Strategies', Williams' (1999) 'Phases and Features of the Transition Cycle' and Bridges (2009) 'The Three Phases of Transition', referred to here as the 'transition cycle', were combined and adopted to develop understanding. Additionally, Nicholson (1984) 'Schematic Summary' and 'Modes of Adjustment' are used to further consider the experience of transition. Having utilised these as theoretical lenses, this research built-on from prior thinking and models. This advancement enabled a new model to be developed and termed here as the Early-Transition Cycle (ETC): a model specifically designed to relate to the experience of becoming a university academic from practice.

The three phases of transition found present during the early years were validated through a rigorous research process and developed from the stories of twenty-three practitioners from four different UK institutions and across eight disciplines. There remains scope for further research in the field to raise awareness of transition and to develop knowledge especially relating to the transition cycles that follow-on from the first five years in post, and the supporting systems.

This chapter provides the foundations for this inquiry describing the motivation, background, and conceptual framing. Here the context is given including a

conceptualisation of three interconnecting themes: the experience of transition, professional practitioners, and academic life. After outlining the research problem, question, aims, objectives, and argument I position the participants' and myself as the researcher before drawing the chapter to a close by showing the organisation and structure of this thesis.

1.2 Locating the Study: The Experience of Transition

As stated by Knight (2002:37) 'the first years in academic work' are, and as I see it, 'important for new academics and it is important that they are well guided in their early years'. To make a successful transition from professional practice to become a university academic, the right guidance and information transfer during the early years is necessary. However according to Blackmore and Blackwell (2003:23) it is ironic that 'institutions that provide development for others do little for themselves. Yet staff expertise is the most important asset in a university; without it literally nothing can be achieved'. Few in higher education are likely to disagree with this comment, which led to undertaking this research.

The experience of transition is captured by a definition from Bridges (2009:5):

'a process by which people unplug from an old world and plug into a new world'

Putting this definition into context here, the experience can be understood as a transition process involving professional practitioners unplugging themselves from established careers and professional life to embark on a transitional journey where each becomes a university academic and enters an academic life to undertake academic work. Understanding the transition experience, and how it evolves, means viewing and conceptualising the three interconnected themes as mentioned earlier.

1.2.1 Conceptualising the Experience of Transition

It takes time to become established as a university academic regardless of the entry route and understanding transition is 'important' according to Bridges (2009:3), as I recognise, especially when related to major life events such as career changes. The specific duration

of the 'transition cycle' varies, according to the model, but it is relevant to this study to note that Smith (2010:1) found that probationary lecturers take twelve months or longer, even though there is no one consensus based on time frames. As Williams (2008) states 'transitions affect us all, up to 10-20 times in our lifetime after major life-events', making transition experiences a process that is both complex and individual.

The idea of transition cycles stemmed from work relating to bereavement and human change. Williams (1999) explained 'transitions were studied for trauma and loss' stretching back over time to the notion of a 'change curve' based on models applied to explain the grieving process specifically those developed by Kubler-Ross in the 1960's. Later, in the 1980's, other models relating to human transition and change were adapted for use in 'organisation change settings' (Williams 1999). Nicholson (1984) highlighted the importance of transition, especially modes of adjustment, as part of a work role transition. However, when understanding transition, it is important to separate the two; transition is different to change and vice versa even in a work context. The two should not be viewed as if they were interchangeable or synonymous because as Bridges (2001:2) stated, and as I view it, 'they really aren't'.

This research understands transition to be different to change, recognising that although a career change is made by practitioners it does not automatically go together that a successful transition occurs. A change of career brings about a 'situational shift' (Bridges 2001:2) in that individuals' make the physical move from one workplace to another. However, it cannot be assumed that this means a successful transition has happened. The process of transition is individual and more intricate than a physical move involving an inner move from one way of being, and thinking, to another. The concept of transition is, as Bridges (2001:2) defines it and as I consider it, a:

'process of letting go of the way things used to be and then taking hold of the way they subsequently become. In between the letting go and the taking hold again, there is a chaotic but potentially creative "neutral zone" when things aren't the old way, but aren't really the new way yet either'

The experience of transition involves different phases and features such as perceptions, expectations, and people's emotions. In this case, new university academics as people passing from one stage within the process of transition to another. Newcomers move from the old ways and being accustomed to professional life and ways of working to the new ways associated with academic life, work, communities, and collaboration.

1.2.2 Conceptualising Professional Practitioners in Higher Education

Professional practitioners are identified by Boden, Epstein, and Kenway (2005:27) as 'people who are entering academic careers via the [professional] route ... usually hired for their professional knowledge and expertise'. Although practitioners are part of the workforce of higher education, understanding of this academic group is limited to a few disciplinary areas such as nursing, healthcare, sociology, and law. However, even in those fields little is known about practitioners once inside academic life.

This research views practitioners as members of the current academic generation whose knowledge and experiences are required by higher education. According to Boden, Epstein, and Kenway (2005:27), universities have become 'more entwined with business and public services and are required to offer more vocationally orientated degrees'. These new university academics are seen here as a community of established practitioners who enter the field of higher education to educate, develop and train the future workforces. An academic community, but a sub-group, who are relatively unknown in comparison to those entering via the research routes.

Here, practitioners are viewed as key knowledge bearers who, having undergone the direct experience of transition, are able to share real-life stories and insights. People who through sharing experiences are helping to further our understanding of the phenomenon from an alternative perspective.

1.2.3 Conceptualising Academic Life in Higher Education

Several concepts of higher education have existed over the years but as Barnett (1990:16) states 'each version has to be understood in its own age'. In other words, in its own historical context or setting. This study views higher education and academic life as related but not the same with one being the field and the other the way of life and

working as part of an established community that can be wider than the engaging institution. It is recognised that, historically, higher education has seen change and altered shape to meet demands and government reforms. Kettridge, Marshall and Fry (2014:8) state:

‘The late medieval university produced rhetoricians and mathematicians, the early modern university served theologians and natural scientists, the 19th century university trained civil servants, and the modern university supports a range of professionals from engineers to teachers and health workers’

This research is focused on modern universities that support and reproduce professional practitioners. Modern universities are the employers, academic communities, and the new workplace that practitioners transition to. It is recognised that the contemporary experience of transition occurs during a time of unprecedented change in higher education.

According to Barnett (1990:25) the 1990’s began an era in higher education that changed the landscape, bringing with it ‘a new emphasis on value-for-money, accountability, planning, efficiency, good management, resource allocation, unit costs, performance indicators and selectivity’ along with ‘reduced opportunities for tenure’. This is a scene that most in higher education are likely to still recognise today as they find themselves caught up amid rapid change and upheaval. For newcomers, they make the move during challenging times. A current era that, as Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley (2009:3) posit, is one in which:

‘an academic revolution has taken place in higher education in the past half century marked by transformations unprecedented in scope and diversity. Comprehending this ongoing and dynamic process while being in the midst of it is not an easy task’

Practitioners arrive to a workplace undergoing transformation where institutions are making sense of the changes. Higher education and academic life could be viewed as

making a transition at the same time as practitioners, adding further complexity. In essence, academic life in the context of this research can be conceptualised as the work that academic staff are involved in: teaching and learning; the advancement of knowledge through research activities; administration; the reproduction of the next professional workforce; and, the forging of one's own academic career. Additionally, transition means being a member of a wider academic community outside of the local institution, as Macfarlane (2007:3) terms an 'academic citizen', which involves serving in the wider academic community or society.

Some, such as Lucas (2006:57), inspired by Bourdieu's (1998:25) work, considers academic life metaphorically as a 'game', specifically a research game. In this light, people are required to have 'a practical sense for what is to be done ... a *'feel'* for the game', to understand the 'present state of play' and to know the 'role' they play within established communities and systems. In the former polytechnics, being part of academic life meant working in environments that placed a stronger focus on teaching and less on research. Although views are shifting towards recognising excellent teaching in universities, this aspect of academic work appears to have been the poor relation to that of research. As Johnson (2015) noted 'teaching has regrettably been allowed to become something of a poor cousin to research in parts of our system'. Further change is to be expected in UK higher education during this study as the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is implemented.

According to Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley (2009:4) higher education 'systems have begun to wrestle with the implications of diversity and to consider which subgroups are still not being included and appropriately served'. Struggles are known to exist within academic life but regardless, when conceptualising academic life, it is not the work, the struggles or issues that bring focus for me but the common ground and shared thinking. As Allen (1988:168) states, having drawn from a quote provided by Eric Ashby, 'universities do not exist for their own sakes, as daffodils and sparrows and mice do: they have a purpose', which they do. It is this common purpose that this research sees as uniting those in higher education and academic life even in uncertain times. Here I take

the view that there is likely to be a consensus that unites rather than divides. As such, higher education, and academic life, here are conceptualised by a common purpose, that of providing a good quality higher education.

Here it is recognised that in current times one of the more fortunate consequences of the upheaval is the growing importance attached to teaching and learning and the ways in which the curriculum is designed. For the incoming practitioners this is likely to be viewed as a positive shift and I acknowledge, as Grant and Sherrington (2006:9-10) did, that:

‘for all the increasing pressures, an academic career still has many attractions, not least to engage in a process of intellectual discovery and convey those ideas to others’

Few other careers or workplaces can offer such a challenge or the opportunity to make a real difference. However, it is a two-sided process because ‘academic life has to be sufficiently attractive to retain key staff and ensure there will be a next generation of academics’ (Blackmore and Blackwell 2003:21) and both sides need to be prepared for the encounter. Understanding the experience of transition to academic life from professional life requires awareness not just of the initial transition process but also a consideration of the evolving experience as part of the journey.

Here I do not set out to predict what impact these changes might have or to envision what the transition experience might be but seek to gain understanding from the insights provided by practitioners who made the move to academic life during challenging times.

1.3 Research Question

Establishing my interest in this topic, finding that little was known about this subgroup of the academic community highlighted a problem existed and an opportunity was opened to develop our understanding about the experience of transition to academic life giving rise to this research. Having reviewed the UK educational literature, and other literature in complementary fields, this study combines the experience of transition with the integrated theoretical lenses related to ‘transition cycles’ offered by Williams (1999),

Bridges (2009), Nicholson (1990) and 'adjustment' (Nicholson 1984) to view the evolving experience. The overarching research question is:

What is the experience of professional practitioners making the transition to become an academic?

As mentioned earlier, having personally made the transition from professional practice to become an academic, I am aware of the complexities contained within this primary research question and further identified the need to address some related questions, which included:

- How can the experience of transition from practice to academic life be better understood?
- How can this understanding lead to a better system of integrating the existing academic community and incoming practitioners as a team to deliver quality higher education?

The hope was that the stories of the experiences would lead to new insights and the identification of improvements to solve issues or problems found within the transition process. The identification of the research question and the other areas to be addressed from a review of existing literature provided the basis on which the aims and objectives of this research inquiry were formulated.

1.4 Research Aims, Objectives and Underpinning Argument

Identifying the research problem and the primary, and related, research questions established the aim of this research, which was to:

Gain a better understanding of the experience of transition, and the evolving transitional experience, to become university academics through the perspectives of practitioners.

To achieve this aim the following objectives were established:

1. Understand what is already known about the experience of transitioning from professional practice to academic life and the most appropriate way to study this.
2. Explore the experience of transitioning from the perspective of practitioners who have already become university academics through this route.
3. Recommend ways to better integrate incoming practitioners into the existing academic community, and into academic life, to deliver the quality higher education demanded as a cohesive team and as required by the changing higher education landscape.

The study is underpinned by an argument that acknowledges:

The conventional journey into an academic career is via the research route: undertaking a PhD and often post-doctoral research before securing a lecturing position. Implicitly if not always explicitly, this is the assumed default journey which underpins academic life and career progression. Entering higher education from professional practice is less common. If universities are to fully benefit from the expertise that practitioners bring, and they in turn are to achieve their career potential, universities need to recognise and support their specific needs and requirements.

1.5 Research Contribution

This inquiry is significant in that it is the first study of the experience of transition, including the evolving experience once inside academic life that views the process through the lens of professional practitioners from a range of professions. The research raises awareness of the importance of transition during the critical early years of becoming a new university academic and from a pathway outside of the more typical route, that of research. Understanding the experience of transition to academic life

through this perspective delivers a wider appreciation of the transition process and enables insights gained to build on prior work related to transition cycles, Williams (1999), Bridges (2009), Nicholson (1990) and (Nicholson 1984).

This study is beneficial not only to new university academics from professional practice, but other stakeholders involved in the transition process. Specifically, institutions of Higher Education, Academic Developers, Educational Researchers, Managers, and those responsible for ensuring transitions are successful and well done. The findings are two-fold benefiting the advancement of knowledge in relation to both theory and practice. Although primarily it relates to the field of academic development, other complementary fields associated with understanding human transition and change are likely to find this research of interest and value in relation to transitions arising from career changes.

As a result of a combination of theory and practice this thesis can outline its contribution to theory and practice in two parts. Firstly, in relation to theory and the advancement of knowledge, this research presents the following:

- The identification of a prior transitional stage within the process of transition adding to the concept of transition cycles provided by Williams (1999), Bridges (2009) and Nicholson (1990) and placing the usage of this model within a new context: that of academic life.
- The addition of a new model as developed through the research findings visualising the transitional journey as three key phases and terming this as the Early-Transition Cycle (ETC).
- The identification of the importance of preparedness on all sides to ensure that transitions are successful, well done, supported, and understood in context.
- The identification of improvements to established systems and academic induction during all cycles of the early-career transition phase.

- The implications and enhancements relating to policy making, procedures and systems.
- Enhancements to knowledge transfer between practice and academia.
- Opportunities to continue to build-on from this study through research focused on developing knowledge related to the evolving experience through mid- and late-cycle experiences of transition within academic life.

In relation to practice, this research outlines the following:

- The implications of on-boarding systems (induction and career management) that are geared towards the more traditional routes of research and the risk of these being a mismatch or misfitting the requirements of another type of academic group, those from the professional fields.
- The implications of established systems that are structured and geared towards the institutional ways of mentoring, coaching, inducting and progression as well as management preparedness to guide practitioners through the transition to academic life through training and their own experience of this type of process or group.
- The ways in which practice and systems of knowledge transfer can be better utilised to bring together academic communities and management in the on-boarding of newcomers to deliver quality higher education during challenging times.
- The ways in which the sector can engage with integration, knowledge transfer and the fusion of people (and knowledge) to develop cohesive teams that join the existing academic community and practitioners in delivering quality higher education to others.

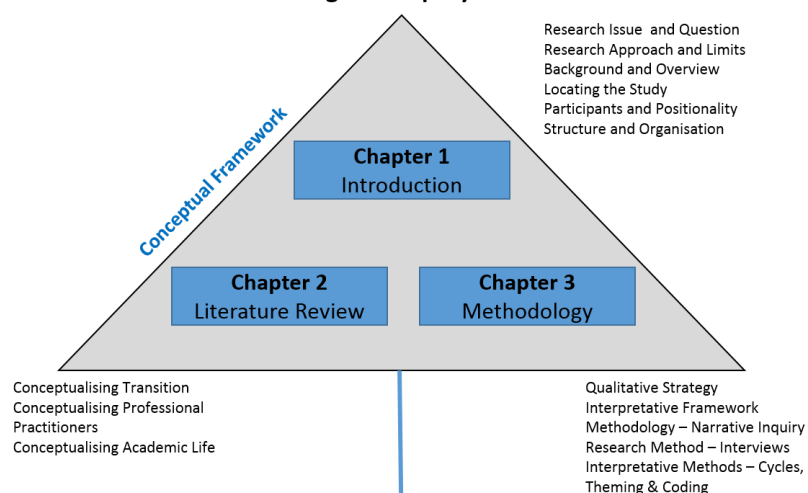
By exploring the transition experience in this way, this study is shaped by a context where the transition process occurred during a time of unprecedented change and upheaval within the UK landscape of higher education. A time that impacted on Post-92 institutions and academic staff. Additionally, the focus placed here on the concept of transition, professional practitioners and academic life meant the most appropriate way to proceed with a study of this nature was through an interpretative framework and by collecting stories of direct experiences from a range of knowledge-bearers across different disciplinary areas. A qualitative research strategy was adopted using interviews and aligned with a Narrative methodology, one fit for this purpose. Subsequently, this enabled understanding about the experience of transition to be formed, interpreted, and used to draw conclusions, recommendations and reflections based on this research.

1.6 Thesis Structure and Summary

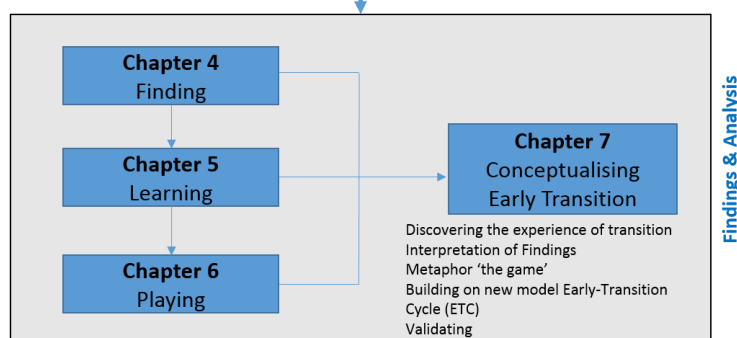
This thesis is structured in three parts, providing as Dunleavy (2003:61) suggested, an upfront account of the information needed to gain an early appreciation of the research. This is used to set out the direction of travel for understanding the thesis structure and provides a thesis route map as Fig. 1 shows.

Part I consists of three lead-in chapters of which this introductory chapter is one; Part II contains four core chapters; and Part III concludes with a lead-out chapter. The first part frames the research, includes the literature review, research methodology and the research methods used for studying the phenomenon. Part II presents, and interprets, data drawing connections from the findings to models representing transition cycles before presenting a new model illustrating the early-transition cycle (ETC) from the perspective of practitioners. Part III draws the thesis to a close providing a conclusion and recommendations and takes the opportunity to reflect on the learning from this inquiry and the experience of transition through a PhD journey from my perspective.

Part 1: The 'Lead In': Framing The Inquiry



Part 2: The 'Core': Finding, Interpreting & Visualising



Part 3: The 'End': Conclusion, Recommendations & Reflection

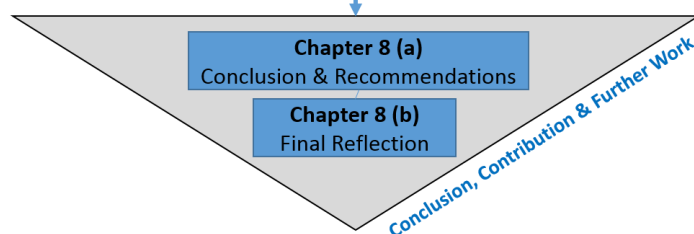


Figure 1 Thesis Route Map

In this first chapter, the framing and context for this study is covered. The related sub-themes are addressed, the starting point established, and the research problem made clear. In locating the study, a broad framing is provided contextualised to professional practitioners becoming university academics and working as part of academic life in, post-92 universities. This chapter provides key information, the research questions, the argument and leads to an overview of the remaining chapters.

In Chapter 2, literature is reviewed from areas related to what is known already about becoming a university academic through themes linked to becoming, work, identity, culture, and professional practitioners. This led to the development of the conceptual framework discussing transition, the notion of 'the game' (Lucas 2006) and emotion at work. Complementary literature is drawn on to support the development of understanding from connecting fields of work. Models of transition were reviewed relating to academic life more generally and a transition cycle that combines three models is shown to be a useful theoretical lens for use here.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology and research methods employed. Details of the methodology are presented, and employment of a Narrative methodology justified. The data collection methods are provided including the adoption of an interview strategy, semi-structured questionnaire, sample, and sites. Methods of interpretation are discussed covering 'Theming the Data' (Saldana 2013:175), 'Pattern Coding' (Salanda 2013:209) and the use of the 'NCT model' (Frieze 2014:12). The employment of a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) tool, ATLAS.ti, is explained and shown to apply to first-level analysis. Included is an evaluation of the approach identifying the limitations of the research inquiry. My ethical stance as the researcher creating and conducting this inquiry is addressed. An account of ethical approval, as gained through the university regulations and systems for a Doctoral thesis, is provided.

The first of the findings are presented in Chapter 4 discussing the first period of the experience of transition as *Finding* the game. This phase of transition focuses on the time leading up to new university academics changing career paths. It presents and discusses the key themes emerging from the interpreted narratives (story) during this first phase relating to: opportunities for transition; self-election and risks; and preparedness for transition. In this chapter, an unexpected discovery is located and presented as the prior transitional stage of the Early-Transition Cycle (ETC). This chapter sets a structure for the reporting of the findings that follow and connects the first of the three phases of transition.

Chapter 5 follows presenting the second phase of transition as *Learning* the game. Key themes emerge around this phase of the Early-Transition Cycle (ETC) and are presented and discussed through the emerging themes: settling in; and environment and shocks. These findings are placed during the time where practitioners learn about academic life whilst engaged in doing the job and at the same time establishing themselves within academic life. The chapter ends with an evaluation and summary of the second phase within the transition process.

The third, and last phase, is presented and discussed in Chapter 6 as *Playing* the game. Key themes show the final period through which practitioners pass during early transition. It is a time associated with making sense of academic life and transition informed by the transitional experiences, observations and becoming members of an academic community of practice. This stage is shown as the final phase of the transition experience but not the end of the process because the transition continues to evolve. It is the last phase that connects to the Early-Transition Cycle (ETC) adding the key themes: place and identity; falling and adjusting; and rebounding and evolving. The chapter ends by evaluating this last phase and leading towards the next chapter which pulls together all three phases into a holistic view of the early experience of transition.

Chapter 7 concludes the findings by drawing together understandings from the previous three chapters using this to visually present a holistic view of the experience of transition. A new model is presented representing the phases and features of the Early-Transition Cycle (ETC). This chapter discusses the connections with previous studies especially where these were recognised as a relevant theoretical lens or having added understanding during the analysis stages.

The final chapter, Chapter 8, draws the thesis to a close with a final conclusion and reflection. It ends confirming the advancement to theory and practice, identifying avenues for future research, suggesting changes to practice, and reflecting on the Doctoral learning experience.

1.7 Summary of Primary Contribution

This research provides an original and substantial contribution to the field of academic development. The study has, as Harrison (2010:34) guided, taken knowledge a step forward by showing how it is different from what is already understood in the field and about the experience of transition to become university academics from practice. Previous studies have not viewed the transitional experience, or the evolving experience once inside academic life, in the way this study does. Nor has prior research taken a wider perspective by viewing the transitional experiences from across a range of disciplinary areas, and institutions, to expand what is known about a new generation of university academics.

Additionally, this research builds on from prior knowledge relating to transition cycles by utilising a combined model drawn from Williams (1999) 'transition cycle', Bridges (2009) 'The Three Phases of Transition' and Nicholson's (1990) 'The Transition Cycle, Associated Tasks, Problems and Strategies' as a theoretical lens to further understand the critical early years of a group of career changers. Academics who move from the professional field to work in another field having already established primary careers outside of the academy. This research contributes a new model termed the Early-Transition Cycle (ETC) illustrating the transitional journey having considered the phases, and features, in ways that prior work had not done before.

Part I

Chapter 2 - Literature Review: Locating the Experience

'If you have knowledge, let others light their candles in it'
– Margaret Fuller -

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to establish 'what is already known about the topic and what needs to be studied' (Oermann and Hays, 2019:99) and to provide an 'account of the work that has gone before' (Murray 2011:124). Specifically, as discussed in Chapter 1, this research aims to design and develop a conceptual framework for gaining understanding of the experience of transition to become a university academic from the field of professional practice. The introductory chapter offered an overview and provided the context setting out the need for this inquiry however the discussion is not sufficient to provide for a robust framework or to begin to understand the phenomenon. This chapter reviews the key areas related to the experience of transition in the context of this inquiry exploring existing thinking and theories. Here challenges and issues in making the transition to academic life from professional life are highlighted. Additionally, the foundations to gain an initial understanding about what is already known regarding becoming an academic and about university academics from professional practice transitioning to academic life is provided. Critiques are drawn from these findings and contextualise the research problem.

I am of the belief that 'conducting some type of literature review seems to be desirable' (Yin 2016:72) but accept that other qualitative researchers hold different views to me preferring not to conduct a 'formal literature review prior to the onset of collecting some field data' (Yin 2016:71). However, regardless of where a literature review is placed in a study, like Yin (2016:71) suggested, and as is my position here, 'a review will need to eventually take place' (Yin 2016:71). I believe it is important to first consult the research literature connected to the phenomenon. Also, because this study is related to professional practitioners, I consider it important to seek knowledge from practice-based literature to compliment and gain understanding from different perspectives. It became evident that the review here needed to be expanded to include complementary literature in associated fields: those of Organisation Development, Human Resource Management and Business Management.

Conducting this review is important because it highlights that there is no single existing framework that addresses the experience of professional practitioners making the transition to become university academics or to examine how these newcomers can be better integrated into an existing academic community to deliver quality higher education. It confirms 'there is no single way to conduct a literature review' (Cresswell and Cresswell 2018:29) and led to recognising a conceptual framework needed to be developed for this inquiry. A framework understood here as 'a collection of general but related concepts from the literature that serve[s] as partial background for the study' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:138) and provides a current 'map of the territory being investigated' (Miles and Huberman 1994:20) guiding research design. This chapter includes a review of 'transition cycles' and justifies the use of three models provided by Williams (1999), Nicholson (1990), and Bridges (2009) as a combined theoretical lens through which the experience of transition can be viewed and understanding developed to inform this research.

I use this chapter to gain an initial understanding of the experience of transition through a summary of the qualitative, empirical, theoretical, grey, and practice-based literature that exists as a body of knowledge linking to this phenomenon, mainly drawn from the UK. This review 'combine[s] knowledge with critical thought' (Silverman 2005:300) doing so respectfully of 'what others have done' (Kamler and Thomson 2006:40) to here, and in the hope of 'gain[ing] some insight into [this] topic' (Cresswell and Cresswell 2018:23) during framing.

This chapter is organised according to those emerging themes and presents an overall story of the experience of transition as found and as discussed here. Accordingly, the chapter is structured as follows:

- Section 2.3 discusses becoming an academic through what is known about academic work, identity, and culture.

- Section 2.4 develops understanding about professional practitioners and specifically what is known about this group who have become university academics and their transition.
- Section 2.5 discusses transition highlighting the key aspects from theory and practice.
- Section 2.6 provides my views as the researcher and academic developer.
- Section 2.7 recaps on the gaps in knowledge located through this review.
- Section 2.8 provides a summary of the research literature reviewed and the need for this inquiry.
- Section 2.9 addresses the need to develop a Conceptual Framework to study the experience of transition and focuses on themes related to academic life such as transition, 'the game', work and emotion.
- Section 2.10 concludes the chapter summarising the key findings here leading to the next stage of this inquiry.

Contributions this far help gain a better understanding of the concept of the experience of transition from professional practice to university academic. The literature reviewed here assists achieve the research aims and objectives set out in Chapter 1 by considering what is known already. Examining limitations and the needs associated with the phenomenon here, helps define the research problem and informs the development of the primary research question directing this study. This chapter has shown how this research is needed, it 'continues to build knowledge' (Petre and Rugg 2011:13) and understanding from what existed viewing the experience of transition from practitioner to academic from a different angle. It concludes having discovered this research is needed, relevant and timely and identifies the need for further research studies. The

chapter conceptually frames this study. Next the methodology used for the literature review is presented.

2.2 Literature Review Methodology

This review of prior literature is guided by the central research question and the need to develop a conceptual framework, a theoretical basis to guide this study and to provide for the next stage of the research design, that of developing the research methodology. Initially the selection of literature here included studies focused on becoming an academic or lecturer, academic life, academic work, transition, transition events, professional practitioners becoming lecturers, and higher education, as shown in Appendix 4. This initial search helped me to clarify and identify research approaches. Ones that seemed interesting and promising for use in this inquiry and these are discussed in more detail in the methodology chapter which follows later in this thesis. The initial search highlights the existence of gaps in the literature relating to professional practitioners who become university academics.

From the initial search it was evident that the general topics were too broad, and these were refined within the scope of the search to academic life, work, and institutions in the United Kingdom (UK) mainly. I believed this to be more appropriate to the purposes of this study which specifically focused on professional practitioners within post-92 institutions and academic life. Identifying this led me to expand the keywords search list (Appendix 5) and to further consider these keywords and combinations. From this a large amount of literature was identified and this needed to be narrowed down otherwise the risk to this study was that it could become detracted, lose scope, and lose the focus on the research question set out in Chapter 1. It took a large amount of work to narrow the findings down to answer those research questions and to qualitatively select the literature that forms part of the review here. Although the listing of combinations of keywords might initially appear over-detailed it provided useful additional search terms that emerged from this study as the research process progressed. This helps focus this study into the key themes, models and theories discussed in this chapter.

I proceeded to collect, capture, evaluate and summarise what was known about the experience of transition generally and then more specifically in relation to the phenomenon using academic, practice-based, and other literature. Relevant literature was located by me using the university's library system (Locate), through databases such as EBSCO, ProQuest, JSTOR and Web of Science. General databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, Scopus, Project Muse and Tandfonline were drawn on when being more field specific. During the review process keywords were refined to understand the experience of transition. I found also the literature was mostly limited to university academics who had become academics from the more conventional route, that of research. Disciplines featured of which nursing and medical professions were the most prominent highlighting a need to understand the phenomenon more widely which is addressed by this study. The review process involved reading abstracts and conclusions to determine fit and using this process to reduce the literature found to a collection that was relevant. Those that provided understanding, insight and those that had additional information applicable to the study of the experience of transition to become a university academic from professional practice.

Acknowledging the complexity and novelty of the phenomena studied here, other complementary and practice-based literature provided valuable information and perspectives not available elsewhere. I used the same keywords to search the databases and Google search and although this literature might be associated with a lower academic or theoretical background the articles, materials, reports, and thinking are produced by people and practitioners who are close to the phenomenon studied. By including these non-academic sources, it has helped gain additional understanding and insights on a wider range of opinions and practices than otherwise would have been possible. Furthermore, this connects to the worlds that professional practitioners arrived from and a field that I had some familiarity with as an ex-practitioner. The use of this literature was justified and reinforced given that the academic literature relating to the phenomena here had not given much attention to the transition of academics from practice.

The problem identified was that although the body of knowledge contained information rich in relation to becoming a university academic through the research pathway, as mentioned earlier, little existed in relation to becoming university academics from the professional field. A gap in knowledge was found that requires research and academic endeavour to build, and develop, understanding. Having recognised that there are disciplinary fields, and fields in academic development literature, that conducted research into transitional journeys to become lecturers or teachers in higher education this is limited. Particularly, to those disciplinary views and did not extend to provide a holistic picture of transition to academic life from professional life. As such, it is necessary for this research to include a wider range of disciplines to gain insights and understanding and for part of the framing of this inquiry.

In summary, from the different literature researched three clear and important findings emerged. Firstly, little is known about becoming a university academic from practice or through those perspectives. Relatively little is known about the experience of transition outside of a few disciplinary areas such as nursing, law, sociology, and teaching. Additionally, within the field of academic development, the development of understanding relating to the transition experience of these university academics from practice appears in its infancy and not as prominent in the existing discourse as other entry routes to academic life are, research and study. From the review not only are these gaps evident, but it is possible to identify key themes and reduce this information to create initial understanding of the story this far. This process led me to being positioned to summarise, critique and present what is known about the phenomenon through the themes mentioned in the introduction to this chapter and as follows next.

2.3 Becoming an Academic

This section discusses, what is known about becoming an academic generally, assisting to gain understanding and identifies themes that give structure to the experience of transition.

2.3.1 Becoming

Defining becoming an academic is difficult in one sense because of the individual differences but more straightforward in another when considering this more generally within academic life. Fanghanel (2012:1) explored what being an academic meant drawing on studies, interviews, and research of her own and that of others spanning several years. This enabled a view of 'different facets of academic life [to be viewed] through academic's own narratives' (Fanghanel 2015:114) as 'lived experiences in practice' (Fanghanel 2015:114). Fanghanel's (2015:1) work suggested that becoming an academic can be understood through 'academics' [own] experience of the realities of practice' and viewed in terms of 'moment[s] of practice' that includes learning, becoming, being, relationships and management. Moments such as learning to teach, being a researcher, engaging with the discipline, being managed, relationships with students, and worldly becoming (globalisation). I could relate to these aspects through my own academic practice, but it was striking to discover that becoming an academic was also seen as 'reproduc[ing] the next generation of discipline experts' (Fanghanel 2012:115). Becoming appeared to mean reproduction or in other words, replicating what existed already in academic life in terms of creating the next generation of experts and producing the field of practice. This might suggest that as part of the experience of transition professional practitioners might be found passing through this type of process and thinking which may or may not cause differences of opinions or tensions.

Another way to consider 'being and becoming an academic' was seen through the view of a 'project' as McMillan and Gordon (2017:788) highlighted from a research study as academic developers. This was interesting however practitioner perspectives of themselves and the move from the professional field to the academic field may differ to these scholars. Practitioners might not view this move as a learning project or as a project of self-development. It might be reasonable to assume that practitioners might be more likely to see the move to higher education as the next job role or career in their life's course. Nonetheless, different views about becoming an academic were important and highlighted that it meant being a person in another context. But for the purpose of understanding 'becoming' here is defined in Webster's dictionary as; suitable or fitting

whereas 'being' is something different, defined as a state of having existence. In practice though, and through this research, it is possible to understand becoming an academic in other plausible ways through other themes found to exist and related, gaining entry to academic life and work, age and length of service, investment and motivation, and support and induction. As such, this section provides a glimpse of the world of work that new academics transition to using these emerging themes.

Gaining Entry to Academic Life and Work

As I found, focus tended to be placed on aspiring academics, those at the start of a career or seeking to pursue academic careers in higher education. However, academic careers specifically focused on university academics from practice received little attention compared to the more conventional routes of research or study which is not unexpected. Beginning as a new academic was seen typically as Boden, Epstein and Kenway (2005:26) noted:

‘people do[ing] well in their first degree, taken straight from school, and proceed[ing] more or less directly to a higher research degree, perhaps taking a masters degree along the way. Their research degree acts as a form of apprenticeship for their subsequent career as academics’

According to this view, entering academic life could be perceived as an apprenticeship and an endeavour that required a substantial amount of time and investment before an academic career started. The experience was one of learning and development that laid foundations and paved the pathway to an academic career and permanency of employment. Beforehand, groundwork was required, and it was key to become research trained to a higher level, doctorate. This added time to preparation as it was deemed customary ‘to take a MA that involves some systematic research training [and] from this, a PhD is embarked on and completing this training was known to absorb time, ‘normally ... four years’ (Grant and Sherrington 2006:11), full-time or longer part-time. Becoming an academic was not quick through the professional route as my own personal

experience showed. My pathway into academic life was one where I had undertaken part-time study at postgraduate level, whilst working full-time in the professional field, before becoming a university academic. In one way, this path led me to developing an interest in moving to higher education, but in another part-time study and full-time work delayed my transition to academic life and work. This type of journey may, or may not, be a similar experience for other practitioners in this study.

This discovery evidences a period of apprenticeship in the disciplinary field that provides familiarisation and socialisation within the traditional community. A transition phase when new, and aspiring, academics are supported, and surrounded, by an academic community. The study will look to identify if a key stage in becoming an academic is skipped by practitioners. Specifically, the knowledge and aspects of academic work and life that they would need during transition and as they focused on forging a career path within the academy. Realms of work and learning that required catch-up when appointed to an academic role.

From this review it was apparent that research became 'a significant driver of activities of western universities only after the Second World War' and that 'the doctorate became the preferred qualification for entry into the academic profession' (Fanghanel 2012:4) later in the twentieth century, and this might be viewed as the position and preference today even as the landscape of higher education alters and reshapes.

Age and Length of Service

Themes relating to age and length of service existed and were found here because traditionally 'most of those who enter academic employment still do so early on in their work careers: in their twenties or thirties, either immediately or soon after a period of postgraduate education' (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight 1998:195). For, those not from professional practice, 'it is not unusual for aspirant academics to be approaching 30 before they obtain a permanent post' (Grant and Sherrington 2006:11). However, as highlighted in Chapter 1 and again in this chapter, this situation was not the same for everyone. University academics coming from practice entered academic life later after establishing a primary career elsewhere. They would have already invested a substantial

amount in another career prior to moving to higher education workplaces, and it is unlikely they will be of a similar age or have served the same length of service but will be interesting to see if this is the case as the study unfolds. My own journey saw me move from the professional field after serving twenty years in practice and approaching forty before I secured a permanent post as an academic manager, Head of Educational Development. Until then my experience of transition involved a passage through temporary and fixed-term employment contracts. A transition experience that might be found different or like those in this study.

In addition to that investment, practitioners entering academic work and life would once again face the need for further personal investment. Specifically related to the time and energy needed in 'becoming' because academic careers are viewed 'as something [academics] intend to engage in for a significant period of time, perhaps (if not necessarily full-time) for their entire working career' (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight 1998:195), which suggest a number of years. But for professional practitioners this might be different depending upon their own personal circumstances, the transition experience and whether they view the move to higher education as a career change or not. Making a transition to academic life formed part of practitioners working careers but not the entirety of it. The move may also be related to life decisions taken by these newcomers to balance professional work and academic work as part of becoming a university lecturer. Given that practitioners come from the professional fields it is likely that they will be different to those university academics in their 30's who are aspiring to have longer-term academic careers and it is expected that this study will return further insights.

The recognition here is that this group of academics (formally professional practitioners) are known from the research literature to arrive later in their professional career, with different lengths of service and expectations to others in the academic community. As such their experiences and support needs in relation to moving, becoming academics, or developing careers may differ to those of other academics making a transition to university academics in academic life.

Motivation and Investment

The motivation to move from one professional life to another is a personal decision linked to different factors. Factors that can lead people to choose to change career during their lifetime. The research literature showed that 'while academic work involves a 'job', most academics and aspiring academics desire more than a monthly salary' (Taylor 1999:97). Academics, like other professional people, seem to expect that 'opportunities for advancement within the institution' (Taylor 1999:97) or within academic life will exist. This seems to suggest that motivators, other than monetary, are drivers for career moves within academic life. But job satisfaction means different things to different people and by becoming an academic, and moving to academic life, factors providing job satisfaction for professional practitioners are likely to change and be achieved in different ways. I experienced this myself and others might experience this as they move or change career but from the review this was not clear.

Being part of academic life provided a range of personal rewards to include being part of endeavours that give you a real sense of purpose, belonging to a community, the ability to advance knowledge, developing oneself intellectually and transforming students through education. As Grant and Sherrington (2006:10) suggest, and as I found as an academic:

'academic life can be demanding in terms of time and effort, but it can also bring its own unique rewards ... and although professional autonomy has been eroded, there are more opportunities to shape and plan your own career path than in most professions ... [it] is as much a way of 'being' as it is 'doing' things'

Being able to shape and plan a career path might be seen as a motivational factor for those entering this new career and life but it was not clear from the research literature if this was a motivational factor for all academics, or if it would be a motivator for practitioners becoming university academics who came to higher education initially to teach. A risk was evident in that if shaping and planning a personal career path was a motivator for practitioners then if they discovered or realised that the demands of the

job role meant they could not do this then they may become discouraged or seek to return to the professional field. Grant and Sherrington (2006:10) helped provide a glimpse of academic life and potentially had begun to show the uniqueness of academic work. From my own experience, few in-service within higher education would argue that academic life is not demanding, draining, or exasperating at times but outweighed by the other rewards that it offers.

It is a rewarding place of work and satisfaction received through intellectual endeavours related to areas of individual interest but where this is eroded it impacts upon motivation levels. Additionally, having the academic freedom to go in pursuit of different forms of human endeavour to learn, advance knowledge and develop fields is motivating, rewarding, and satisfying. But again, if this professional autonomy is being reduced due to changes in higher education or through managerialism with a drive to 'achieve more administrative efficiency' (Winter 2009) this can be expected to impact upon the experience of transition, maybe even to be demoralising or impact on personal values causing tensions.

Given that becoming an academic, and academic life, involves a substantial investment it is not surprising that educated people naturally expect to be able to progress (Grant and Sherrington 2006; Knight 2002; Blaxter, Hughes and Tight 1998). Established and aspiring academics look for a return on their investment potentially seeking a 'position with a view' (Taylor 1999:97). But without a unified consensus of what this means for different groups of academics then personal perspectives, and circumstances need to be considered for further understanding and insights to be gained. It is accepted that not all new university academics will seek the same rewards, position, progress, career patterns, merits, or recognition but what they do seek is not clearly evident from the review of research or practice-based literature. This study provides the opportunity to enrich our understanding of different academic communities and to give insights into what motivates practitioners to become university academics and to understand their longer-term career plans or expectations.

On-boarding and Support

On-boarding is defined in practice-based literature and understood here as referring to a welcoming to a workplace or a professional community. A welcome that 'cover[s] the whole process from an individual's contact with the organisation before they formally join, through to understanding the business' ways and getting up to speed in their role' (CIPD 2020). This process has induction within it but provides more to incoming employees, new staff, than a stand-alone induction process and this is something that university academics from practice are likely to be familiar with or to have experienced as part of their transitioning in professional life outside of the academy. I did personally and as a professional manager of staff. However, on-boarding and induction as part of becoming a university academic from the professional field is different.

Boyd (2010:155) acknowledged 'new lecturers [from professional fields] find their transition to higher education challenging and confusing because of tensions over what a lecturer should be' arguing newcomers need to be nurtured through 'the fuzzy learning architecture' (Boyd 2010:164). He suggested 'support for [those from professional fields] should be considered as academic induction for 'old timers' rather than catch-up for novices'. The point here is that 'new university lecturers in these professional fields are generally selected due to their successful performance as practitioners ... rather than on more traditional requirements for appointment as an academic focusing on scholarship' (Boyd 2010:155) and therefore are not 'novices' but they will have different support needs to other types of university academics during transition.

Austin (2014:57), in an empirical study, considered those who 'bring to their teaching an experience of other professions outside [of] the academy' not as 'old timers' but as 'late entrants' to academic roles specifically teaching in higher education. But recognises, as I and other scholars did, that the process of becoming requires underpinning with continued development and professional training. Austin (2014:66) highlighted institutions are known to use a PGCAP (postgraduate certificate in academic practice) as part of the training and induction process but the problem arising with this in post-92 institutions surfaces as one where these programmes mainly concentrate on becoming a teacher in higher education, only one realm of academic work. Whilst this is 'useful' the

issue arises when these programmes provide signposting to other key areas of academic practice rather than a continued professional development for 'old-timers' or 'late entrants' to academic work, life, and careers.

As such, and as I experienced in my own practice of leading a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice for several years, less emphasis might be placed on the broader aspects of becoming an academic, changing identities, entering academic life, the fullness of an academic role and getting started with research or carving out an academic career. Even though PGCAP's are part of an induction from this review, there was no one consensus on the topics or areas that should be embodied as part of academic induction. Typically, topics included: a university-wide welcome, teaching and learning contexts, student related contexts, knowing what is expected, mandatory training, research overviews, quality systems and leading learning experiences. As part of the learning and orientation process attending a PGCAP might be considered as a form of 'socialisation' and network, and this is something that new academics are likely to appreciate and find beneficial during transition. However, it was not clear from the review, outside of nursing and teaching professions, how other professional practitioners were socialised or acclimatised within their discipline or as part of early transition to academic life and careers leaving a gap for this study to gain insight and understanding.

CIPD (2017) explained staff induction, generally from the perspective of corporate life rather than academic life, presenting this as an orientation process:

Where employees adjust or acclimatise to their jobs and working environment. As part of this, 'orientation' a specific course or training event [can be used] that new starters attend, and 'socialisation' can describe the way in which new employees build up working relationships and find roles for themselves within their new teams ... and [for] getting up to speed in their job.

In contrast, as Kensington-Miller (2017:679) stated practices in academic life can mean that many inductions are quite short-focused providing 'a broad overview on how the university operates, what is available, and a brief introduction to the fundamentals of

teaching in one swift deluge of information' leaving new academics to deal with and make sense of what is supplied and transferred. She argued 'peer mentoring, [should] be offered to academics new to the university, following an initial induction programme' so 'a smoother and faster transition into academia [occurs] than if they were left alone' (Kensington-Miller 2017:687). This highlights other forms of support are known to be useful and available in addition to induction, PGCAP's, and socialisation in the discipline. One type of support intervention, that I know to be valuable from my academic practice and in professional practice, is the mentoring of new staff.

Other scholars recognised the value of mentoring as Thomas, *et al* (2015:320), from an evaluative research study of mentoring networks, pointed out 'some [new academic staff] need more support than others. These scholars suggested 'new academics have common needs in professional development support, despite disciplinary differences and the beliefs of many administrators', which resonates with this inquiry. Additionally, Thomas, *et al* (2015:320), and other qualitative researchers including myself, appreciated 'mentoring is crucial for new academics' if a positive early-career experience is to follow otherwise the risk to institutions, disciplines and studies are that these newcomers 'may leave academe' (Thomas, *et al* 2015:320). A concern here, and for institutions, especially as it is known that 'in many disciplines recruitment is often very difficult' (Blackmore and Blackwell 2003:21) and expertise hard to replace.

Blackwell and McLean (1996:80) suggested 'mentoring is increasingly common in education', 'that it is widespread in British universities, and that there is a trend towards more organization-wide, formal schemes and the incorporation of new lecturers' (1996:84). However, it is not clear from the literature how university academics from practice are formally, or informally, supported through a mentoring scheme or system which this study might gain insight on. Mentoring was viewed and presented as 'a way of helping junior academics in their transition into new positions' Thomas, *et al* (2015:328). These scholars argued 'some individuals may need more assistance with developing a mentoring network' than others.

Whilst initially I agree that mentoring can be deemed as valuable for 'junior academics' I am of the belief also that new university academics from professional practice would find mentoring useful as they move to higher education and academic life. However, the concern, and a risk, raised by Thomas, *et al* (2015:328) associated with the existence of 'sink or swim' attitudes' suggested new academics may not receive adequate or any mentoring in some cases and be left alone to find their own way as part of transition. Little existed in the literature regarding the mentoring of professional practitioners during transition or as part of a support mechanism for becoming a university academic through their entry route.

The review of different literature related to on-boarding and support for the career transition of new university academics, as well as my own practice as an academic developer, showed components being used to 'train' newcomers. For example, induction and PCAP, but as mentioned it is not clear how mentoring either formally or through peers is used to support those moving to academic life from professional practice. This review of scholarly and practice-based literature reveals not enough is known about the support for transition especially from the perspectives of professional practitioners. A gap this study hopes to gain understanding about accepting that academic work, and academic life, are very different to professional life and maybe more complex than starting a new job in a new organisation outside of the academy.

I recognised from my own prior research of part-time lecturers that they likened their personal journeys to 'a roller-coaster ride' (Wilson 2013:122) and it might be expected that university academics from practice may have similar opinions however without hearing their stories, or undertaking research, this is not clear. Furthermore, it emerged from this review that institutions, as well as academic developers, needed 'to provide clear role models' (Boyd 2010:164) for those making the move from practice to academic life. People who might have very different support needs to those of new academics entering from the more traditional route, research or study. The other aspect found missing was that little was said about the support and training to become a researcher

other than through doctoral study and insights might be gained through a study of this nature.

It would be reasonable to expect to succeed and perform all academic work and tasks well, practitioners require the right type of guidance, help and mechanisms to support transition. For example, interventions designed and geared for managing transitions generally but also in the different contexts. If newcomers 'don't know what they don't know' (Wilson 2013:117) then problems are likely to arise relating to knowledge flow and transfer which might be exacerbated if new university academics are 'reluctant to ask for support as it seems to conflict with their pursuit of credibility' (Boyd and Lawley 2009:12) or if newcomers simply do not know what to ask for.

2.3.2 Work

Academics, as Kettridge, Marshall and Fry (2014:277) explained are required to be 'competent in all areas of their academic practice, but mak[ing] a particular contribution to two of the three key performance areas of research, teaching and learning and administration'. Grant and Sherrington (2006:9-10) added 'academics are required to simultaneously be successful teachers, cutting-edge researchers and to show an aptitude for an increasing burden of management and administration'. There is consensus that academic work has, and is, changing as the landscape of higher education alters to become more corporate, managerial, accountable and performance focused. Findings highlight academic work is measured work that is assessed, evaluated for impact, and more controlled than ever before. Brew (2006:1) explained known research measures showing these include 'publication or citation counts, number of research grants, peer review, etc.' Teaching measures, on the other hand, include 'student evaluations or ratings of teaching effectiveness, personality, colleagues' ratings, etc.' Brew (2006:1).

The differences between teaching and research are clear however it was possible to draw a unifier from what existed based on common factors and shared academic values. Here these are seen as 'learning, critical reasoning or scholarship' (Brew 2006:1) bridging divides between aspects of academic work a little. These ideas of academic activity and performance measures suggests that academic work is not as 'free' as it once was, or as

people might believe it still is, instead academic work is guided and influenced by different agenda's and change that impact on the field of higher education and subsequently academic work of individuals as well as communities. McAlpine and Ackerland (2010:8) suggested academic work 'is experienced as increasingly hierarchical and managerial ... conflict[ing] with the desire of many for more collegiate environments' which may, or may not be, the view that professional practitioners have as part of transition but might become evident through this study.

Finding a traditional view of academic work in existence is not a surprise because from my own academic practice, as well as through this review, academic endeavour 'encompasses the three aspects of research, teaching and service' (McAlpine and Ackerland 2010:4) but the level of engagement in each of these realms differs for individuals. McAlpine and Ackerland (2010:4) observed, as I have in academic practice, that 'the reality is that many academics will hold different positions in their careers over time that may privilege one of these aspects over others'. This might mean for individual academics different combinations of teaching, research, administration, and service work may take priority for them during their academic careers. As Grant and Sherrington (2006:8) emphasised university academics from practice need to 'approach academic life with as few illusions as possible'.

In other words, to be prepared for and aware of the new working environment they are entering and the 'shifting sands' (Debowski 2022:7) that need to be seen and navigated. As Debowski (2022:16), through a reflective review, highlighted 'academics will need to be adaptive and responsive to the cues and challenges that are likely to be encountered in the coming years' showing that changes to the work and environment are expected to continue as newcomers transition which is not unexpected. From the literature searched, outside of the field of nursing, little was discussed in relation to the experience of transition and being prepared for academic work, life, or change. As such, this underpins the need for this study to understand more.

Findings, as mentioned, showed research, teaching, and administration dominated views about academic work. Malcom, *et al* (2009:495) agreed adding 'academics often find

that the proportion of their working time devoted to particular activities is carefully specified; in some cases, the hours and spaces devoted to teaching, research and administration are actually laid down in employment contracts', a given workload and allocation of work. These scholars, drew from empirical studies, the view of the 'messy experience of academic work' (Malcolm, *et al* 2009:495) along with the messy realities of this work and the academic workplaces as academics experience them (Malcom, *et al* 2009). In terms of conducting research, they suggest 'if we understand the actors in academic work to include ... academics ... we open up a rich field ... and other forms of social inquiry' (Malcom, *et al* 2009:504) to understanding, as I believe to be important for a study of this nature. Particularly, gaining insights into work and workplaces as new university academics from practice experience them.

Boden, Epstein and Kenway (2008:28) drew attention to a fourth aspect of academic work 'consultancy/professional practice' which they suggest that universities 'now want' along with being able to develop the professional field or area. But from the reviewed literature little was available in relation to this part of academic work. Other realms did not feature strongly either as I found, and as McAlpine and Ackerland (2010:4) confirmed, 'service [work] is not strongly emphasised in the UK' literature in relation to the discourse around academic work. Both consultancy/professional practice and service work exist in academic life, but consensus appears to be that academic work predominantly involves research and teaching (Brew 2006). The enduring vision of an academic being a pursuer and transmitter of knowledge' imaged as a 'teacher-scholar-researcher ... in which research and teaching go hand in hand' (Fanghanel 2012:4) might not be reality for all university academics particularly new university academics from practice who join academic life initially engaged to teach. This study helps gain insight and add to what is known.

From the review the expanse of academic work was broad, deep, complex, and individual. In addition, academic work when considered here emerges to include; career management, continuing professional development, identity development, survival, learning, scholarly, digital, emotional, supervision, relationships with students and peers,

global and extends further to academic citizenship as Macfarlane (2007) added. Furthermore, university academics that did not hold a doctorate on entry were likely, as I viewed it, to aspire to become research trained to the highest level (doctoral level) and to develop the discipline and professional field. However, given that 'the last quarter of the 20th century has been a period of significant transition for both higher education and the state in the UK' (Henkel 2000:13) these new university academics, as they transition, will be involved in carrying out work in a changing workplace. Consequently, as Barcan (2013:77) pointed out 'different ideas and expectations of the academic role now co-exist' which in the context of this inquiry impacts on new academics and their work.

It is unlikely from the findings, and as I observe through my own practices, that newcomers from professional practice quickly become involved in research related to their discipline or professional field. It is more likely teaching and learning dominate during the early stages characterising their academic work in the main as producing the field of practice through the reproduction of professional practitioners for those fields. But as we exist in a changing world and digital age this reproduction is likely to be different to the past and in the future providing the additional work of keeping up with the pace of change. As Devlin and Samarawickrema (2022:28) emphasised 'the future educator is likely to be the one who can astutely understand the disruptions and upheavals and adapt their thinking and practices accordingly', a comment with which I agree and recognise to exist as part of transition.

Teaching and Learning

Given practitioners arrive initially to teach this section focuses on understanding teaching and learning as part of academic work. Taylor (1999:95) acknowledged 'in the traditional path to an academic career, the development of teaching expertise has been relatively unimportant'. Teaching has moved and is in the process of change as its importance rises up the agenda in higher education and as this work is externally assessed through measures such as those connected to the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). Now universities, as providers of higher education and learning experiences, are encouraged

‘to work with their students to develop better student experience[s] for all’ (Office for Students, 2020).

Taylor (1999:65) predicted the future of academic work and working was ‘likely to place greater importance on an academic’s role as a teacher, professional educator, and leader in the development of communities of practice which involve both face-to-face and virtual conversations. As I see it, and as became clearer from this literature review this prediction appears to be played out and becoming reality for some academics. University academics from practice may find that rather than being viewed as a lecturer they are considered as a teacher in the terms Taylor (1999) mentioned. Adding further to the combination of tasks, and performance measures, that cover a wide spectrum of areas of work and roles for any academic. But for newcomers in particular all this work and roles might be more difficult to tackle in one go without the correct level of support in place and knowledge transfer. It is to be expected that tensions and pressures will exist when undertaking such diverse tasks and during the process of transition but precisely what these are is not clear. Moreso, for professional practitioners making the transition ‘a critical element of developing academic practice lies in how an individual learns to navigate these tensions and competing pressures’ (McAlpine and Ackerlind 2010:5) and through this study further understanding should be gained.

For those university academics from practice, who as mentioned in the main come initially to teach, they are entering an environment that is heavily measured and targeted which may or may not be seen to be problematic from their perspectives. They might not have the freedom they once had or have been accustomed to as experts from the professional field, but this is not clear from the literature. However, as Blackmore and Blackwell (2003:21) stated, and as I view it, ‘academic life has to be sufficiently attractive to retain key staff and to ensure that there will be a next generation of academics’. An issue arises if these experts from the professional field arrive to academic work and life to find that it is not as attractive as they thought or expected. Furthermore, practitioners may or may not be aware of the list of jobs attached to academic work and careers and hopefully this will become clearer through the findings of this study. Nevertheless, it is

not possible within the scope of this inquiry to cover all aspects of academic work but of particular interest to me, and as a topic that is receiving attention in the research literature, I focus next on identity work as part of becoming an academic from practice.

2.3.4 Identity

Taylor (1999:43) pointed out, and as I believe holds: ‘identities attain significance over time, as particular qualities are linked with particular signs of identity – they are achievements’. Identities are more than personal achievements in life and viewed ‘as *social* achievements, and a requirement of social life. They give a sense of belonging, a feeling of personal significance, and a sense of continuity and coherence ... identities provide the basis for expectations in social interactions – we know what to expect from others and what/who we are expected to be. As Taylor (1999:43) stated, and as I see it through this review and academic practice, the view of identity as a social (and cultural) achievement is consistent with the work of a number of researchers’. Identities, as Taylor (1999:43) added, are grown, and developed over time. A view consistent with my own experience of transition to become an academic from practice.

Through a research study, Jawitz (2009:241) defined identity as ‘how new academics learn to be effective educators’ showing thinking at an individual level. To this, Fitzmaurice (2013) and Sheridan (2013) added, as cited by Billot and King (2017:613), the idea that identity was ‘an ongoing construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of personal and professional identities’ a view that combined the self with work and careers. Henkel (2000:251) widened understanding identity to the embodiment of actors within a structure where academics are seen as “both distinctive individuals and embedded in communities of primary importance to them, first the discipline and second the university’ and it is these communities that were known to help shape individual identity. Another view as emphasised by Alpine and Akerlind (2010:162) is that academic identity is ‘dynamic, grounded in our previous experiences’. However, it is not clear from the literature if all this thinking applies in the same way to university academics from practice who will be arriving shaped by prior experiences and work life.

From the review I found, as Clegg (2008:340) suggested and as I agree, that 'academic identity is complex and that [it cannot] be read off from descriptions of mainly teaching, research, or management roles' or the work or roles that academics undertake in higher education. Additionally, identity was not viewed as a 'fixed property, but as part of [a] lived complexity' (Clegg 2008:229) and academic identity understood as a 'multiple and shifting term [that] exists alongside other aspects of how people understand their personhood and ways of being in the world' (Clegg 2008:229) which in this study refers to as academic life. Billot (20010:719) through reference to the work of Gordon (2005:40) acknowledged the identity of an academic emerges from the 'nuances and complexities of the concept of the career life cycle'. In other words, knowing who you are as an academic and the ways in which the work that you do impacts, shapes, forms or restricts an academic identity. But for practitioners who have had a career life cycle outside of academic life it is not clear from the review if they will understand that moving to this new environment requires them to form a new identity or if this might be perceived as an extension to the professional identity they already hold.

It was evident that thinking about academic identity unified around the idea that it was 'fluid and multifaceted' (Billot and King 2017:613) and different to other professional identities. Fanghanel (2012:6) conceptualised academic identity as 'constructed, relatively fluid and influenced by academic's biographies and habitus, their positions within the academic field and their own ideological beliefs about education'. This scholar added 'beliefs about the discipline, teaching and educational goals and towards other aspects of their environment – research, technology and the world more broadly' influences an academic identity. Additionally, Jawitz (2009:242) noted 'the relationship between teaching and research within the discipline also impacts on the nature of academic work and hence on academic identity'. I found no one consensus existed that explained or defined academic identity in relation to university academics from the professional field or using their perspectives.

As expected, differences existed between teacher identities and researcher identities. Through reference to other scholars (Clark 1987; Shulman 1993), Jawitz (2009:242)

distinguished between these saying that 'while research usually involves engagement with an academic community, teaching has been characterised as an individual private affair'. Given this review finds, and stated by Jawitz (2009:242), that 'in most disciplines teaching is viewed as a generic activity that lies 'on top of' the 'real' academic work, namely research' then it might be assumed that practitioners need to be able to create an academic identity that is both general and individual upon arrival. However little exists in the literature on ways to do this or that helps new academics from practice gain further understanding. Through this study, and from the perspectives of practitioners, the opportunity to understand more and gain new insights exists to fill knowledge and practice gaps.

It was clear from the reviewed literature that institutions, disciplines, and academic communities play an important part in helping newcomers form an academic identity. Becher and Trowler (2001:47) pointed out that 'disciplinary community involves a sense of identity and personal commitment' and Henkel (2000:22) emphasised this was the place where 'academics construct their identities, their values, the knowledge base of their work, their modes of working and their self-esteem'. Moreso, as Jawitz (2009:249) showed, by reference to Kogan (2000:209), the disciplinary community was also the place where 'a sense of academic identity flourishes'. Even though practitioners brought professional capital on arrival 'the field of higher education valued the development of research capital' (Jawitz 2009:247). As seen, translating a professional identity and teaching identity into an academic identity might not be entirely possible to accomplish unless it was 'collectively valued by their academic community' (Alpine and Akerlind 2010:163), the discipline and institution. This identifies a risk which has not been addressed by literature. An area this inquiry can explore further through the findings.

Churchman and King (2009:507) explained 'identity perspectives focus on members' understanding of 'who they are' and the ways in which this influences, and is influenced by, what they do at work'. From this I took the need to obtain an understanding of identity, and academic identity, directly from the practitioner perspectives. Alpine and Akerlind (2010:162) through Billot (2006) explained 'individuals have pre-existing

personal understandings and motivations that influence how they interpret the present, reflect on the past and imagine the future'. In other words, how they create, recreate, and reimagine their identity whether that is academic identity or a professional identity. Part of the experience of transition to academic life for professional practitioners is likely to involve the creation or reimagining of their identity not from a background socialised in academic life. Boyd and Lawley (2009:12) pointed out 'crossing boundaries requires new lecturers to emphasise and build different elements of their identity'. But as Vahasantanen and Etelapelto (2015:1-2) positioned:

'professionals have a lengthy academic education and specific expertise, and they have tended to have considerable autonomy in deciding how to work and how to use their competencies ... work environments are heterogeneously populated by various actors (managers, clients, colleagues) and they are characterized by diverse socio-cultural conditions (such as the guidelines for work, the management culture, and the equipment) ... [but] in parallel with these expectations, professionals face increased demands for continuous individual career and identity negotiations when their work practices (practices that comprise work tasks, activities, and ways of working) and organizational structures change ... all these aspects challenge professionals to reach sustainable decisions concerning work, identity and career'

A professional identity does not cease during transition but is carried with practitioners. Billot (2009:719) noted conflicts and tensions existed when academics 'have multiple and different interpretations of who they are' and as institutions change identities that mean university academics need to change and adapt, as seen through my own transition experience when schools and departments were closed, restructured, or re-organised. Instead of being stable an academic identity might now be considered, as Billot (2009:718) posited 'subject to continuous revision' as I accept here.

Wood, Farmer, and Goodall (2016:243) from the findings of their research argued that 'as a transition from one professional identity to another' is made practitioners 'located themselves in the space between identities, whilst maintaining a commitment to inform

and influence their previous field of endeavour ... it was unclear that any of the participants aspired to transition to the identity of a higher education lecturer'. Vahasantanen and Etelapelto (2015:1) indicated that professional agency came into play as the teachers in their study 'decided to uphold their professional identity' and did not want to transform their identity entirely which might be found as the situation for some university academics from practice, for example those from the field of nursing or law but also for other practitioners.

Clegg (2008:343) found from her study that even though some academics were 'in effect confined to one role, they did not experience this as severing them from their way of being as academics. [instead] they described their experiences in terms of what was valuable to them ... doing virtually all teaching, or all management, did not strip these identities from them'. They were found describing their 'love' for what they did even though they were not 'attached to discipline or research in a traditional sense' (Clegg 2008:343). Not all university academics from practice will want to be 'choosing to develop a 'purely' academic career' (Jawitz 2009:246) within academic life. To do so would require role models for new academics 'in the development of their academic identities' (Jawitz 2009:246) from whatever professional field that they joined academic life from and in relation to their future career.

It was evident through this review that practitioners making the move to higher education and academic life would need to 'embrace the transitory, the complexities and the ambiguities of experiences that give the promise of a myriad of choices or reformulations of personality' (Henkel 2000:14) and to find meaning and their own individual identity within this process. However, during the transition journey practitioners might not discover 'the essence of the person, the self or the soul' (Henkel 2000:13-14) nor may individuals desire to. Here, I follow on the belief that identity is temporary, not fixed, stable or lasting within a career move.

Establishing identity, specifically an academic identity, in a new field is seen as part of the work of becoming a university academic but this new identity does not define the entirety of a practitioners life or career. Identity as part of transition, is envisaged here as 'a series

of separate and incommensurable identities' that shift and move over time (Henkel 2000:15), that merge or reform as part of the transitional experience. Change in the field of higher education has led to 'newer emerging identities, or hybrids' (Clegg 2008:340) not shaped by the past but it is not clear how this relates to university academics from practice. Additionally, other identities such as 'class, gender and the significance of family' (Clegg 2006:229) are salient but outside the focus of this study.

Throughout this review it was evident that for practitioners moving to academic life creating an academic identity was not going to be straightforward or an easy task. Wood, Farmer and Goodall (2016:243) shared concerns raised by previous authors stating that the 'space between professional and academic domains is poorly understood and that professional identities here are largely self-constructed and consequently are often insecure and may not be highly valued by others within higher education ... [existing and endorsed] outside of the university system, in the form of recognition of the status and value placed on higher education lecturing from within the field of practice'. In other words, professional identities might not be recognisable inside academic life or disciplines. Clegg (2008:356-338) reported about conflictual spaces from a small study of practising academics where a participant described 'the ways in which, despite her achievements, which were considerable, there was a sense of never quite being able to meet the criteria ... because I think there's an element of, well you're from industry and actually you're never going to be, in inverted commas, a 'serious academic'. I recognise that this might, or might not be, something that the participants in this study experience as part of transition. An area this study may be able to shed new light on.

Wood, Farmer and Goodall (2016:243) suggested that:

'people who have been successful and well established in their previous professional domain may find themselves adrift in higher education until they arrive at a way of exercising influence on their previous field. Where they achieve such influence, whether in teaching, curriculum design, course leadership or research, their new professional identity is validated, resolving for a time the need

to transition further towards a separate professional identity as lecturer in higher education’

This suggests that during the evolving experience practitioners might be adrift in the early career phase as they become a lecturer. I relate to the length of time it takes to create a validated academic identity and recognise newcomers might struggle to do this initially during transition. But, through this review it is evident that identity work, validation, formation, and transfer can lead to tensions, struggles and impact on confidence as newcomers try to fit in and identify who they are in academic life through their work and prior life.

Even though academics from practice possess the professional capital and expertise that universities sought ‘the field of higher education valued the development of research capital’ (Jawitz 2009:247). For practitioners as newcomers, who are unlikely to have the same research capital as established academics, then trying to translate a professional identity and teaching identity into something that was valued might not be entirely possible to accomplish unless it is ‘collectively valued by their academic community’ (Alpine and Akerlind 2010:163), the discipline and institution. This identifies an individual risk.

Academic life is filled with ambiguity (Clegg 2006:336) and as Monk and McKay (2017:227) showed, through reference to Alice in Wonderland, the guidance for newcomers constructing an academic identity was to first ‘decide where [they] want to go before asking for directions’. As ‘transitioning to academia involves much more than knowledge of the tertiary environment and its expectations of us’ (Monk and McKay 2017:227) that might prove more difficult and complex for those becoming university academics from the professional field. The emerging concern as Wood, Farmer and Goodall (2016:243) identified from their study, ‘professionals moving into higher education may find their strongest asset undervalued within the operation of higher education institutions and that this may lead to the sense of insecurity’. This may impact upon individuals in different ways including their emotions. Where experiences ‘challenged professional identity, competencies, ways of working, and general well-being

[with] no way of changing work practices or of solving the conflicts [seen]' the findings showed that practitioners may 'enact professional agency via deciding to leave'. So, it is important to understand more about this group through the concept of identity.

I recognised and as Billot (2009:719) pointed out 'it is within this changing academic environment that academic identity remains a dynamic and slippery construct' requiring further discourse especially in relation to 'the impact on how the individual assesses their academic identity' and the barriers to adjustment which in this study I hope to gain further insight. Likewise, as Monk and McKay (2017:228) suggested 'by understanding our curious and tumultuous journeys, we can realise the potential for agency inherent in how we respond to [the driving or influencing forces] and understand identity as performance'. In other words, transition experiences as important work and a project part of a human journey. Furthermore, getting an identity right is important but as Taylor (1999:43) claimed, and a view that I believe still holds strong, is that 'successful identity work is ... anxiety reducing – a different version of boundary formation and maintenance' as part of transition and a career trajectory. Here I view identity as a 'mode of thought' (Henkel 2000:15), a concept, thinking about identity as part of the experience of transition.

Through the review I found connected to identity the notion of reputation. Grant and Sherrington (2006:176) provided a glimpse of 'reputation' during the early-years and suggest it involves:

'accustoming [themselves] to the rules and norms of academic life and carving out a reputation as a researcher and as a teacher and supervisor. [The early years] involve becoming familiar with what is necessary to publish in peer-reviewed journals, how to secure a book contract with a publisher, and how to secure and manage a research grant'

Given practitioners join established academic communities and networks 'whose livelihood [it is] to work with ideas; the ideas are those that lend themselves to sustained exploration, and which form the subject matter of the disciplines in question' (Becher and

Trowler 2001:23) reputation matters. It is on their individual and academic reputation that new entrants are likely to be identified or judged by academic communities, peers, and the institution. Professional reputations, like identity are likely not to transfer easily across to this new environment and the risk is that professional reputations may not be acknowledged in the same way within academic life. Practice-based advice suggests that 'the most important aspect of your reputation is the name you make for yourself as a researcher, as a teacher and as a good colleague' (Boden, Epstein and Kenway 2005:51) and practitioners, as seen here, are initially starting from the base of teaching and being a colleague.

However, whilst a reputation for teaching can be formed it does not lead to the same levels of prestige as research. Blackmore (2016:171) highlighted 'prestige trumps reputation' in universities and requires additional work. Attaining prestige 'does not reside in a person ... requiring more than one person to value something' (Blackmore 2016:3). Prestige is afforded by others in the wider academic community and discipline. The support for building reputations and prestige are shown to differ in relation to academic work. Becker and Denicolo (2013:2) stated there was 'a significant difference between the approach others will take towards you as a researcher and that which you might experience as a lecturer'. Building reputation, or prestige, is likely to be easier in one area of academic activity than the other.

For example, educators 'are required to fit into a system ... [one where] much less attention will be paid to [their] individual needs' (Becker and Denicolo 2013:2). In contrast, for researchers 'much is done to foster [their] well-being, encourage [their] intellectual development and support [them] as [they] produce excellent, ground-breaking research' (Becker and Denicolo 2013:2). The reality, as Blackmore (2016:175) acknowledged, as viewed here, is that 'for most new entrants prestige may not be available and the best that can be hoped for is reputation'. I accept that for professional practitioners in this study this may prove to be their reality during the transition experience. Hence, themes of reputation and prestige are not included in the criteria here but open to take forwards in other inquiries.

2.3.5 Culture

The transition to academic life involves entering an established community, workforce, and environment. An environment with 'taken-for-granted values, attitudes and ways of behaving, which are articulated through and reinforced by recurrent practices among a group of people in a given context' as Becher and Trowler (2001:23) explained. In other words, culture is defined as 'the way we do things around here' (Hannagan 2005:21). Culture and recurrent practices need to be learned by newcomers so they are equipped with the knowledge of what the appropriate values, attitudes and ways of behaving are in the new field. This kind of knowledge and practice cannot be picked up overnight because it has been accumulated and perpetuated over many years through academic generations relying on effective knowledge transfer. Transferring knowledge to newcomers relies on people and systems to pass this on.

New academics need to learn through practice and socialisation in disciplinary fields as well as within the academic community about the knowledge that is embedded within people, academic practices, and cultures. Culture plays an important part in transition because it consists of 'a variety of socialisation mechanisms' (Hannagan 2005:22). Mechanisms and systems operating formally and informally in organisations, communities, and structures. Socialisation in 'ways' of communities, practices and academic life helps but for academics from practice they have different needs to be met. So far, entry involves a passage through professional life and not through study or research training inside academic life. Practitioners arrive from a different working environment and culture. The techniques individuals use to translate 'the way things are done', or how they perceive this, might be viewed differently to that of established and known practices. Practice and understanding might even be at odds with the cultural norms in existence.

Cultural shocks might surface during the early experience of transition. For practitioners, joining another working culture involves merging the 'ways' of two worlds of work. That fusion takes place in a new context and working environment. As Tomkinson (2013:27) acknowledged 'moving from one institution to another could be a culture shock'. Taylor

(1999:39) referred to the work of Toffler (1970:19) and highlighted 'culture shock is the effect that immersion in a strange culture has on the unprepared visitor'. This has merit because practitioners are in a way alien to academic life when they start out and potentially could be an 'unprepared visitor'. Transition may, or may not, mean that knowledge, experience, and expertise that helped practitioners function in professional life is 'suddenly withdrawn and replaced by new ones that are strange or incomprehensible' (Toffler 1970:19). As such, culture and culture shocks might feature during the evolving experience of transition.

The understanding of culture shock from practitioner perspectives, across disciplinary fields, brought into consideration transition cycles especially the feature of 'first shock' (Williams 1999). This and 'culture shock' (Tomkinson 2013:27) seemed connected but it was difficult to interpret these further within the context of the experience of transition. Hearing first-hand from practitioners and about the stories of how the transitional journey evolved and progressed was needed, which this study accomplishes.

Another issue found, and a concern here, is that it is known already that 'academic staff are subject to major tensions in their working lives, which institutional systems often do little to resolve' (Blackmore and Blackwell 2003:21). As Billot and King (2015:613) suggested there is 'a growing body of research into academic staff turnover highlight[ing] a perceived lack of support from the institution as a reason for leaving it' and to this concern, through this review, might be added the transformation of identity and little recognition for professional capital as part of that process.

In summary, having discussed becoming, work, identity, and culture it is clear making a transition to academic life from practice is complex, multi-faceted and not a straightforward career move. Becoming an academic here is shown to involve a learning experience and transformation but also struggles and differences. Missing from what is known is the perspectives of professional practitioners who have undergone the experience of transition and become university academics from practice. A gap this study fills. I recognise from my academic practice, and personal experience of transition, that the move is more than a job role or career it is another way of life, being and thinking.

Very different to professional life and work as shown here. The next section turns to consider professional practitioners and what is known about them from their stories and experiences.

2.4 Professional Practitioners

In this section I present the findings from a literature review relating to what is known about the experience of professional practitioners working in a post '92 university environment making a transition to becoming an academic drawing from scholarly, other, and practice-based findings. The intention is not to repeat what scholars have discussed earlier or what is known about becoming an academic generally. Here focus turns specifically to professional practitioners and their experience of transition as shared through research, practice, and direct experience. Findings focus on professional practitioners in healthcare and teaching professions mainly where more is known but where this identifies a gap in the literature in relation to other professional practitioners from different backgrounds, a space that this study can, and does, assist in gaining further understanding and insights.

2.4.1 Identifying Practitioners

It is recognised that across all the different contexts and disciplines professional credentials relating to experience, expertise, professional qualifications, and professional membership are often part of the investment made by professional practitioners prior to the career move to academic life. In each disciplinary context, practitioners transition to higher education with their own expertise, experiences, professional credentials and standing having been trained, socialised, and qualified through the time spent in the professional field. The review showed practitioners arriving from professional roles to new roles identified in terms of university teachers, lecturers, tutors, and academics, which is not unexpected.

Of note, was that where scholars had researched professional practitioners, they did so using a variety of research approaches such as personal reflections, case study, narrative, ethnography, and phenomenology and varying sample sizes in line with methodologies adopted within the field of academic development. Here this was useful to establish

because as part of the research design and framing these approaches and methodologies are reviewed later as part of the selection of a fitting methodology.

Defining university academics from practice was complex because of the individual nature outside of the job roles they transitioned to as mentioned earlier. Common to all, across all disciplines, as Carrillo, *et al* (2011:69) explained is that professional practitioners 'usually have a background as experts in the discipline area in which they teach, but often not a similar degree of expertise in education, higher education practices. Secondly, practitioners 'usually accept the position as a novice university academic without any previous preparation for assuming this role', views that resonate with me through my observations as an academic developer in practice.

Although there was not one agreed central definition this was not problematic for this study and more widely from the research literature reviewed practitioners could be identified through roles held in the professional field and professional communities, the place where transition began. Weller (2016:4) showed practitioners in 'law, management, healthcare, engineering, education and creative arts'. Practitioners are not limited to six career backgrounds and through the review it was evident that these university academics had transitioned from professional careers as accountants, economists, historians, business leaders, journalists, architects, surveyors, social workers and so on.

This review showed this group arrived to academic work and life by entering the disciplinary field associated with their practice field. Fields, which findings show, spanning across the: arts, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and applied sciences. Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (1998:195) highlighted practitioners move to academic life 'later on, after developing a work career elsewhere, or after a career break devoted to caring for young children and/or older relatives'. Others appear to make this decision after taking a career break for other reasons. Combined all these differences were seen adding to the diversity of the contemporary academic workforce and to the requirements for appropriate support interventions that enabled successful transitions

to occur, and that could be used to develop understanding about this group of university academics.

It was evident that as a group, these university academics were diverse, made up of individuals, who having established a professional career, and after accumulating needed credentials, crossed over from the professional fields to academic work and life. Subsequently, it is this transition that makes the study of the phenomenon here possible. Higher education needed experts to join them because as Saito (2011:190) emphasised 'it is crucial for students to communicate with real practitioners, because of the practical nature of many disciplines' and sharing professional expertise with future practitioners was a reason they chose to move to a career connected to the field they knew.

2.4.2 Practitioner Views

Other literature related to practitioner views added understanding. Andalo (2011) commented 'universities are increasingly likely to have people who have a life outside of university so that they can understand the application of what they are teaching'. Practitioners recognised the value and difference they made by 'bring[ing] a sense of reality and we have the ability to tell stories which is hugely underrated' as Andalo (2011) highlighted drawing this quote from Byrne (2011), a practitioner who was a senior lecturer. However, not all practitioners sought a full transition to academic life preferring instead to keep a 'foot in both camps' by working in both professional life and academic life as 'dual profession lecturers' (Andalo 2011). The proportion of practitioners who make this choice was not clear from the literature, but led me to view practitioners as 'hybrids' (Boden, Epstein and Kenway 2005:28) in this study and seeing that:

'Many people are hybrids of two or more routes into the academy. A very common hybrid is for successful professionals to decide to develop themselves and their understandings of their own professions by undertaking a research degree. Sometimes, these people end up changing profession and becoming an academic in their working lives'

Here practitioners could be viewed as changing profession when taking up a role as a university academics but, as mentioned earlier, that might not be the same for all. Most,

as I viewed it, are professionally qualified to degree level and likely to hold professional membership related to the professional communities they are part of, as I did. Finding this began indicating practitioners, as academic ‘hybrids’ when inside academic life, engaged in forming academic careers would change and develop further during the evolving transitional experience, but this had not been researched.

It was evident that even though this group held academic roles, practitioners might not yet be identified as having become ‘an academic’. I recognised that transition, in the context of this study, was more than a move from one place of work to another. Transition involved a change in speciality and career which happened within another field, the disciplinary field, during the transition experience. I acknowledge that not all practitioners have sights on reaching the fullness of an academic career but the proportion of those that did, or did not, was not clear.

Ebdon (2011) added employers and students were behind the ‘drive to attract professionals from the workplace into academia’ a position Andalo (2011) supported and claimed would ‘improve [students] employment prospects’. But there is no guarantee that practitioners after being attracted would stay for the long haul especially if support needs were not met or if the new role was not as imagined. Some would return to professional fields and to professional careers, but it is unclear how many do.

2.4.3 Place and Rank

Place and rank featured in findings in relation to job roles, hierarchy, and allocated positions within academic life and work. I acknowledge that this is no different for university academics joining workplaces in higher education and as expected, practitioners on appointment had job role titles assigned a process that occurs naturally in all organisations locating newcomers in the hierarchy and placing individuals in the community. An interpretation, drawn from my experience in academic development, uses the different academic positions or ranks known in UK HEI’s to illustrate the place practitioners transition to:

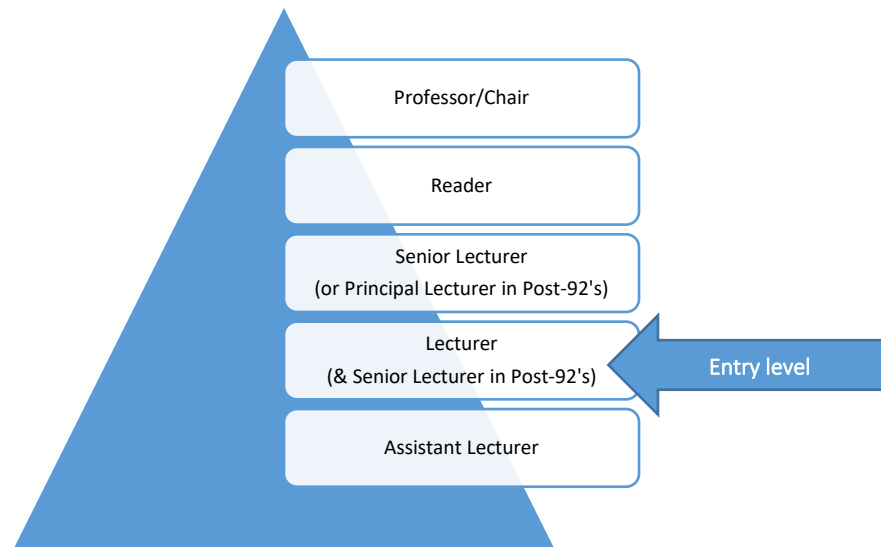


Figure 2. Academic Places and Ranks

Fig. 2 shows entry points (place) and levels (rank) generally and specifically relating to practitioners who become lecturers depicting the place newcomers arrive to, below management ranks and research levels but above junior or graduate teaching levels. Here 'lecturer' includes senior lecturers in post-92 institutions. This diagram serves to illustrate the organisation structure, career trajectories and career paths within academic life ones different to those experienced in professional life.

Viewing place and rank helps identify where academics are located during transition. For some practitioners this positioning might be considered lower down in ranking in comparison to previously held roles or different to where practitioners pictured their situation. For some practitioners a change of status or position might be easier to deal with than for others. I accept this here.

2.4.4 Other Views of Practitioners

Other literature also identified practitioners as professional experts brought into higher education to provide students with a 'more current and professionally orientated learning experience' Gilbert (2013:3). Required to fill a knowledge gap with the professional knowledge capital that institutions sought in addition to what they held. Practitioners were drawn from an external labour force because of their applied knowledge and for knowledge transfer as (Gilbert 2013:3) explained 'examples of day-to-

day practice and relevant cases which can illustrate theory and increase relevance' of a topic and profession.

This professional knowledge combined with applied experience formed the social capital that institutions needed, and practitioners came to share with future generations. Weller (2016:4) added, and as I recognise, 'professional expertise and experience [are] important prerequisites for a teaching role in a university'. Professional expertise becomes the conditions that enable some practitioners to hold the professional capital needed for cross over to academic life and work. Thus, newcomers arrive equipped externally with transferrable knowledge, professional standing and applied experience about the subject area but not socialised or trained in academic life.

Practitioners were understood to take the 'professional route' (Boden, Epstein and Kenway 2005:27) into academic work meaning that these university academics were initially appointed to an academic role to teach but also to move to being research active. The review showed practitioners understood by others as new university academics, lecturers, employees, career-changers, and professional experts who had 'forged [their] own career paths through a series of organisations' (Williams 1999) before moving to higher education. A career move that was 'only part of [their] total life experience' (Williams 1999). Becoming a university academic from practice was a 'moment' that occurred in a course of a working life and not the entirety of it. Weller (2016:11) and as other scholars recognised 'progression to a teaching role is likely to have evolved out of a prolonged engagement with their discipline through postgraduate study, research or professional practice and applied experience'. It was not clear from the review if practitioners viewed the cross-over as a career 'progression' or if they saw it as something else, which this study hopes to clarify.

Another feature shown by Boden, Epstein and Kenway (2005:30) relates to practitioners having 'professional standing'. This accrued outside the field of higher education and seen as an asset that placed practitioners in good stead for gaining entry, a knowledge asset beneficial to the engaging universities. Regardless, as Grant and Sherrington (2006:11) highlighted, securing an academic post and career involved serving an

apprenticeship. One known as 'long and gruelling' (Grant and Sherrington 2006:11). A process involving research training and a lengthy job search to find the right role and right institution. For some academic posts professional standing was a fundamental requirement for entry but not necessarily shown to be a requirement for academic career progression certainly not in the same way that research standing was seen to be.

Analysing findings relating to practitioners helped me recognise, beyond my own transition experience, that university academics from practice had 'a very difficult mountain to climb if they were to become academics in the full sense, doing research and working in a professional capacity as well as teaching' (Boden, Epstein and Kenway 2005:27). Consensus showed a learning experience and importance of continual professional development inside and outside of the field of higher education. Megginson and Whitaker (2007:6) commented that the 'path we walk is unique' emphasising:

'it is no longer possible to do all your learning at the start of your career and then spend the rest of your working life using what you have learned. The sell-by date for professional learning is getting shorter and shorter. Our assets do not remain the same if we do not freshen them – they dwindle, and they dwindle fast'

As such, the experience of transition could be expected to involve practitioners looking to the future and ensuring that their personal 'sell-by date' does not expire or diminish. Transition would mean forging and walking along their own career path in academic life even whilst learning about academic work and culture situated in the community and disciplinary field. But without fully knowing what is required individuals might not know how to do this or be aware that this was part of academic work early on or understand where they wanted academic life to lead to.

Practitioners need to be 'clear about what [they wanted] from [their] first job' (Grant and Sherrington 2006:12) as a university academic and understand what they wanted from academic life. It would be natural to assume though that professionals, as educated experts, would not want their expertise, knowledge, and skills to go unused, dwindle or reach or go past a 'sell-by date'. Each newcomer required an awareness of what was

needed to form an academic career and ‘some notion of where [they] would ultimately like to be’ (Grant and Sherrington 2006:12) in the end. Therefore, in academic life maintaining professional expertise, standing, and continuing to develop professionally were likely to be important aspects of transition. Otherwise, capital and value practitioners held on arrival might risk being dwindled, misspent, used or in need of refreshing as the transition experience evolved.

Although becoming a university academic provided new challenges and opportunities the transitional journey was seen here as a personal risk. A risk to the heavy investment made in professional careers, and personal life, outside of the academy. Boden, Epstein and Kenway (2005:27) showed these as known risks and ‘given the interest of universities in making sure that all their staff are able to contribute fully to the academic life of the institution’, to include those from professional fields then the need to provide support was known but not clear.

Regardless of the quality of support systems or interventions, practitioners transition to academic life for different and personal reasons: to share knowledge and develop future professional generations, flexibility of working; change of direction; a new stimulus/challenge; and maybe in response to a more vocational draw towards teaching. But they did not mention the term reproduction but in essence that seems to appear to be what is occurring. Regardless of the reason, university academics from practice were understood to seek real job satisfaction by having a ‘sense of purpose and belonging’ (Grant and Sherrington 2006:2) to an academic community and service to higher education. No one single reason why practitioners cross-over from established careers is found and this study may shed new light. Next transition is focused on.

2.5 Transition

2.5.1 Transition Defined

Scholars mainly consider a transition experience as Oldland (2011:779) explained ‘making a career change [that] is an intensely personal one’, a statement with which I agree and recognise. To this statement Oldland (2011:779) added ‘the transition from one role and working environment, with its culture, expectations, and norms, to another may elicit a

range of difficulties, emotions and opportunities, which are unique to each individual' and highlights that whilst the move might be challenging 'it is possible to make this transition without turmoil' (Oldland 2011:779). This requires fitting support interventions. Saito (2011:190) suggested 'it is challenging for ex-practitioners beginning to teach in higher education settings' but believed this was 'due to their long experience in other fields'. I agree that challenges exist as part of a transition experience and recognise that professional practitioners have spent a lengthy time in the professional field before moving to academic life, but I tend to disagree that the long experience in practice is the problem. Through this study it is possible to gain further insights and understanding surrounding this experience.

2.5.2 Transition: Adjustment

Boyd and Lawley (2009:8) through findings of their research study showed adjustment and learning were found part of the experience. One such adjustment arose when new lecturers became 'aware of a change to a lower status within their new institution', the place where newcomers started becoming an academic from. Although these scholars research study was limited to nurse-educators nonetheless it provided insight into an experience that may, or may not, be at odds with practitioners own views across other disciplinary areas. It did highlight practitioners views may alter during the evolving transitional experience or as university academics from practice encountered events that change their thinking and positions on things whilst in academic work and life.

Additionally, as part of this adjustment and learning practitioners arriving to teach as Saito (2011:193) noted from a research study 'may go through a process of adjustment, in terms of needing to develop new pedagogies that are suitable for university-level students'. As such, during early transition, they might be found 'expending vast amounts of time and effort in preparing lectures, seminars, course outlines, and workshops for the first time' (Sinkinson 1997 cited by Saito (2011:193). Additionally, adjustment and learning in this new job role was known to include understanding 'the rules and administrative processes of their new institutions' (Guilfoyle 1995; Guilfoyle, Hamilton, Pinnegar and Placier 1996; Saito 2001:193), which I believe still holds. Practitioners as

new academics through findings were shown to be 'immersed in training and professional development activities designed to assist [them] to perform in this new environment' (Odland 2011:789). It appears most interventions focus on teaching and administration only, consistent with earlier findings.

2.5.3 Transition: Managed and Supported

In a study undertaken by Hurst (2010), the transition of physiotherapists was explored helping to understand how transition was managed, the challenges faced and the ways 'previous professional experiences' shaped new roles as lecturers. That community of practitioners viewed the move 'as a definite career change typified by periods of uncertainty and anxiety, particularly regarding what was expected of them' (Hurst 2010:242). Needing to know what was expected was typical across the literature reviewed and transition seen to include a range of different themes which Hurst (2010:242) summarised as; expectations and preparation, helpfulness of transitional experiences, coping, culture, confidence, and dual professionalism, which was not unexpected to discover.

Expectations, especially those transferring with practitioners to academic life, were acknowledged as important especially 'developing helpful expectations' as Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (1998:45) highlighted, through Nicholson's (1990) transition model. Expectations formed part the transition process and as such might create assumptions that employing institutions are expected, and required, to match or meet. For example, a continuation of a successful career path, a career that rewards and values people; support in making the transition to a new role and career, and recognition and reward for contributions made.

Previous studies recognise university systems were notorious for haphazardly inducting or orientating new academic staff (Knight 2002:48). Although some improvements might be expected since then this was not shown to be sufficient, diverse enough or appropriately fitting. Gourlay's (2011:595) reflective study provided insight into why some professional practitioners might decide to leave during early-transition:

‘a profound mismatch between the values, ethos, practices and subjectivities prized in her previous clinical setting, and those which she perceived to be valued in the university ... she judged this mismatch to be emotionally intolerable, and left’

Although this research study was of one new lecturer, I recognise from my own academic practice, that professional values and practices transfer with practitioners to academic life during transition as they did with me. Here I accept that other mismatches between professional life and academic life might exist as the experience of transition evolves. Mismatches that could be reconciled and others that were not tolerable resulting in newly appointed academics leaving their discipline and community early. A loss to institutions, students, and future generations. Areas open for discovery during this inquiry.

2.5.4 Transition: Issues

Practically, issues found involved the need for socialisation in academic life: a socialisation seen and known to be different to that in professional life. In the first five years, practitioners moved through the transition process of initial arrival, probation, and an early-career phase. Each moment required different mechanisms for knowledge transfer and support. Several other important practical issues were highlighted, as Hurst (2010:245) noted, areas requiring attention and ones highlighting initial support mechanisms that would help university academics from practice acclimatise. Hurst (2010:245) captured main themes:

‘Training in order to engage effectively with up-to-date teaching and learning strategies and with research activity, albeit discipline- or educational- specific research. A structured induction programme ... alongside training which focuses upon the ‘transitional or academic professional’ and the balancing of expected roles (pedagogical knowledge, discipline- and educational-specific research, and the importance of both to the existing professionalisation of the subject) ...

the new physiotherapy lecturer should receive induction research training in order to contribute to the departments research activities'

Getting support for transition right consistently shows as an important feature across the review not just in relation to teaching and learning but for all aspects of academic work. Transition, as Boyd and Harris (2010:21) noted the continued development of 'self', the removal of 'taken-for-granted assumptions' related to workplace learning, time for newcomers to focus on professional development planning and support from 'some role models on which to base their own emerging identities as academics' on. However, the problem of workload, knowing where to actually get started with becoming an 'academic' or even the absence of role models was echoed across the review.

Other problems noted for practitioners who had not taught in higher education before arrival relate to missing the pedagogical experience to draw from (Oldland 2011:781) which was found beneficial by those that did. Additionally, moving to a different work culture presents challenges as Saito (2011:194) explained as 'owing to its unique – in many cases, political – aspects ... hierarchical power relations, both informal and formal', and newcomers need to be aware of cultural differences. Although Wilson, *et al* (2014:5) argued that 'transitions from 'industry' to 'academia' represented a unique type of career change and recognised 'this form of occupational transition challenges the traditional and increasingly outdated conception of the linear academic track'. A system, having served needs well this far, requires revising in light of new career trajectories, changes in HE, and to account for diverse groups of academic staff working in, and moving to, academic workplaces.

2.5.5 Transition: Teaching Route

A study, based in one post-1992 institution, added 'the focus of the early career academic in the first five years is very much on the role of teaching in higher education and that not only is there no automatic progression to, or inclusion of, other roles, but there are distinct self-envisioned and self-articulated barriers to that progression' (Gale 2011:223). It was evident that during the early years the importance, or 'invisibility', of newcomers from practice being linked to disciplinary and research communities 'means that for these

staff, who often do not come from a research background, there is no foundation being laid for inclusion of any future research role', presenting a personal risk especially for practitioners who are career changers.

Additionally, the new world of academic life would require new academics from practice to be members of a different profession as well as a learner, scholar, writer, networker, and researcher (Gale 2011:224) adding to identity work, learning and workload. This is a large list of activity and learning especially without any prior socialisation in academic life or without the right levels of mentoring, support or coaching as part of the arrival package and onwards transitional experience. Saito (2011:197) affirmed issues are part of transition that practitioners 'confront at the beginning of their academic careers'. Shreeve (2010:82) highlighted that sometimes the experience of teaching was viewed negatively in that it 'drains your energy and feeds off practice without feeding anything back into it'. In other words, time spent by practitioners on teaching activities transferring knowledge and energy into this realm of academic work, and to the institution, might mean this is potentially at the expense of other areas needed for academic career progression. For example, scholarship and research or continued 'engagement with the practice world' (Shreeve 2010:83), which for some practitioners might be more important or risky than for others.

2.5.6 Transition: Challenges

It was evident that transition involves challenges, key tensions and struggles and these themes were captured aptly by Hurst (2010:245) as: uncertainty at points; lack of confidence associated with credibility as a lecturer; developing pedagogical knowledge and skills. Additionally, making the transition to academic life from practice can mean accepting that it is not straightforward and that it requires 'developing a *fuzzy* learning architecture' (Boyd and Harris 2010:22), as mentioned earlier, but practitioners might not know this. For example, a personal strategy nurtured by institutions but one where the institutions, or departments, do not intrude as Boyd and Harris (2010:22) emphasised through reference to Brown and Duguid (1996). A transition journey is individual and academic careers need to be designed in ways that enable a person's full potential to be

realised and reached. In this sense, forming an academic career is as much a learning journey and work as a job role. The right 'institutional support mechanisms' (Hurst 2010:245) are required and learning and development programmes that run alongside the transitional journey are essential not only to support transition to academic life but also for the future.

2.5.7 Transition: Knowledge Transfer

Transitions rely on the transfer of knowledge and information, and this does not only apply to institutions and departments but also to the wider academic community and disciplinary communities. Practitioners have their own responsibilities and should not be wholly dependent on the institution to provide what is required because people have their personal and professional goals to achieve. In this regard, transitional journeys call for degrees of self-efficacy to complete and manage career transitions well. However, this does rely on knowing what is needed and as Boyd (2010:163) suggested, and as viewed here, new lecturers from practice need to be:

‘encouraged to shape their own development, to pro-actively plan for their scholarship and research activity and to see more clearly how that will link to their teaching’

Shaping a transitional journey, and academic career, depends on individuals knowing where to find the knowledge they need and how to get started. This is important because knowledge lays the foundations on which successful transitions can be built from the start. Sources of such knowledge were found to include informal mentoring, peer learning, structured induction strategies designed to support practitioners in their disciplines, postgraduate teaching and learning programmes, academic peers and being supported to learn on-the-job and receiving assistance to help identify precisely what an 'academic' needs to prioritise. It is recognised that the 'transitional experience was multifaceted and unique to the individual' (Hurst 2010:245) and changing, or taking on, another professional identity, an academic one, features as part of transition and work. As mentioned, this shows to be an area requiring support.

2.5.8 Transition: Identity Matters

During transition, identity matters and as Saito (2011:198) emphasised 'in any professional field, ex-practitioners who become university faculty members will have to deal with the need for the formation and development of a new identity as educators in their field, adjust to a new working environment and engage in research activities', which is expected here. The review brought attention to the terms used to define practitioners. Academics from practice were found associated with terms that referred to them as novice lecturers, novice teachers or novice researchers. Individuals were new to academic life, but the term 'novice' is representative of something else. Although academics from practice are 'experts' in their field and needed by higher education the literature did not utilise this term as much. This finding was intriguing because the two terms, novice, and expert, are contradictory. Novice suggests being a beginner and expert skilled, experienced and a specialist in a field. The two do not go hand-in-hand but were used.

It is acknowledged here that the transition process consists of different stages and that in making the passage to academic life newcomers switch from being an expert in the applied discipline, subject area, and wider professional community to being new, a beginner, in academic life. At times new entrants might be both novice and expert adding complexity to the individual nature of transition and to this study. Practitioners making a transition to become a new university lecturer are involved in 'becoming a professional educator' (Boyd 2010:163) which can be challenging and transitioning to an academic from practice is not likely to be any easier in a workplace that is already known to be 'complex and often contradictory' (Boyd 2010:163) but also changing.

Saito (2011:192) noted, and as I agree, 'developing multi-faceted identities is not an easy task' and through the works of Dinkelman, Margolis, and Sikkenga (2006a) Saito (2011:192) found difficulties with a shift in identity existed from a research study suggesting practitioners 'retained their identity as first-order [practitioner] in order to construct an additional identity as a second-order [university teacher]. Abbas and McLean (2010:342) in a research study related to professional identity when becoming

sociologists suggested 'sociologist's identity, like everyone else's, is precarious and held in place through a temporary unification of different elements (or networks) of the social world in which they are embedded'. A view I connect with because identities as I see them, and as viewed here, are not sure but temporal and passing over the course of a working life as titles, job roles, organisations, agendas, and people change. Although the study carried out by Abbas and McLean (2010:339) related to part-time staff it is reasonable to expect that identity change and issues is likely to be the same for other practitioners which this study hopes to understand more about.

Lee (2013:69) recognised, as other scholars did, an academic identity is formed through training and professional socialisation within a community but specifically 'occur[ring] during the period of a PhD', which is not the case for the university academics here. They arrive to academic work and life unidentified as a 'teacher scholar' (Lee 2013:69) or having scholarly identity. They have that work to do. But as my own prior research showed, in relation to part-time lecturers, often they were 'not initially aware of how to create an academic identity and often did not know what one was' (Wilson 2013:120), which for participants of this study who are full-time academic staff may or may not be the same opening the chance to discover more. To discover what new university academics identify themselves as during transition.

However, as part of the experience of transition, and as Saito (2011:192) pointed out the workplace can encourage new teachers 'to maintain their identity' rather than to develop a new professional identity as an academic which is a risk for these newcomers but one they might not be aware of initially as they focus on the teaching aspect of their role. Dickinson, *et al* (2022:293) suggested 'moving from practice into academia (like all changes in community membership) involved negotiation of an individual's place within that group ... as practitioners become competent HE academics, they do not necessarily leave behind their previous community of practice' but during that time they may experience 'the 'liminal state' of being between professional identities' (Dickinson, *et al* 2022:293) as Smith (2010) noted in relation to probationary lecturers.

The review shows new or different terms being applied to identity for professional practitioners such as 'pracademics' by Dickinson et al (2022:291) who 'explored transitions made by former or current practitioners who are now university academics' and identified a label. But the review highlights that developing an academic identity can be further confused especially when the language of higher education is changing as these new university academics make the transition. Macfarlane (2011:60) observed 'the notion of 'the academic' as an 'all-rounder': someone who teaches, researches, and performs a variety of service or administrative tasks', a popular image of academic life and work, is out of kilter with the contemporary workplace and as such elements of academic work is being taken over by 'para-academics', those who specialise in one aspect of an academic role such as skills advisers. Consequently, practitioners may or may not know the right way to go about forging an identity that fits this new world of work. I am curious, through this study, to understand more about the formation of a fitting identity that encompasses all professional practitioners bring and now are.

2.5.9 Transition: Emotions plus Feelings

Making a transition to academic life, and the evolving experience, is both personal and emotional as I understand from my own journey, and as the reviewed literature confirmed. Various emotions were identified for practitioners making the move ranging from 'distress: difficulty in changing their identities, adjusting to the new work environment and fear of research' (Saito 2011:190), 'self-doubt' (Wilkinson 2020:364) amongst other emotions which is to be expected but no one central list existed for professional practitioners describing the range of emotions they could expect or would pass through as part of the experience of transition, enabling this study to consider findings here further. Feelings were shown to exist such as being overwhelmed with the additional work (Boyd and Harris 2010; Saito 2011) and at times 'feelings of inadequacy' (Carrillo, *et al* 2011:69), amongst others but, as with emotions, no central list could be found in relation to practitioners making a transition.

Of concern, was the negative impact of combined emotions, feelings, and pressures on newcomers leading them to a 'sense of isolation' (Saito 2011; Knowles and Cole 1994;

Pinnegar 1995; Knight and Trowler 2000; Carillo, *et al* 2011), in their departments or disciplines. Farrell (2022:10) noted, as I had, the journey was like a 'rollercoaster' and three negative emotions exist during the first year 'frustration', 'anger' and 'boredom', but here they did not 'give up'. Farrell (2022:10) reported novice teachers develop 'emotional awareness' that helps 'regulate their emotions to minimize stress' so during the first year they 'thrive' (rather than survive) and this study hopes to add further insight.

Gadsby (2021:1) from research findings suggested 'many intelligent, capable, and successful individuals believe that their success is due to luck, and fear that they will someday be exposed as imposters'. It will be interesting to see if participants here think this way. Wilkinson (2020:363) through another research study agreed that 'underlying experiences of imposter syndrome' existed and unexpectedly emerged at times, as this scholar found. Oldland (2011:787), through a reflective study stated 'sometimes [she] still feels a fraud in academic environments' but does not mind it much now. Alternatively, Hardy, *et al* (2022:163) noted from research investigations practitioner-academic transition 'can be a challenge' but, as their study found, specifically related to academic writing and publishing. But, that support with academic writing as part of the 'practitioner-academic transition' (Hardy, *et al* 2022:174) turned negative feelings into comments such as 'so maybe I'm not such an imposter' (Hardy, *et al* 2022:174) indicating help with transition made a positive difference, which is not unexpected but recognised as needed. The sense of being an imposter or a fraud is not something I experienced but I accept, given the findings of this review, other ex-practitioners might feel this during the evolving experience of transition which this study may gain understanding of and establish how this might be mitigated by newcomers to academic life and work.

2.5.10 Transition: Support and Role Models

Wilson, *et al* (2014:5) suggested transition to academic life from practice can be viewed as an occupational transition that challenges the 'traditional and increasingly outdated conception of the linear academic [career] track, a career trajectory that for university academics from practice might be short-, medium- or longer-term depending on the point of entry and the length of time they have remaining ahead of them to engage in

academic work. Consensus existed across the literature reviewed that support for transitions was needed. Wilson (2019:853) noted 'concentrating on the transition itself provides a focus to better understand the experience of transition', which this study does.

Shreeve (2010:89) suggested 'universities should help and support [practitioners] to engage fully in academic life as well as recognise and value the different components that contribute to being a successful academic', showing wider support provision. Additionally, Saito (2011:193) through the work of (Swennen, *et al* 2010) highlighted newcomers may struggle in the role without 'clear role models' such as experienced successful academics that could show them what is good academic practice and career management. I, like others, recognise support (especially mentoring by experienced colleagues) is beneficial and it will be interesting to understand more about the mentoring experience here.

Of interest was a comment made by Saito (2011:198) regarding novice ex-practitioners who might consider difficulties as job pressure. This scholar suggested 'if they recognise these struggles as the seeds of enquiry, they may perceive the situation differently ... to recognise these struggles as the seeds of new ideas ... supportive colleagues are needed ... to help novices frame problems as opportunities for learning in the ethical, institutional, or academic sense and to help them enquire into those problems', mentoring support which university academics from practice might benefit from early on.

2.6 Researchers View

From my perspective, I agree with scholars and practitioners that the experience of transition to become a university academic is not straightforward and it does not follow a traditional linear career track. Like Bridges (2009:5), and as mentioned at the start, I see the experience of transition as 'a process by which people unplug from an old world and plug into a new world', one that is different. I agree with Wilson (2019:853) that focusing on transition itself provided an opportunity to concentrate and understand the experience of transition but, as I recognise here, this needs to account for the perspectives of those with direct experiences especially where little is known. I recognise from this review that the experience of transition is likely to involve emotional work and

feelings but also that newcomers, as Lucas (2006) suggested new lecturers might metaphorically be entering 'the game' of academic life which is an interesting notion. One that requires an identity review or change. From the review, and as I argue here:

The conventional journey into an academic career is through the research route: a PhD and doctoral research before securing a lecturing post. Implicitly if not explicitly this is the assumed default journey that underpins academic life and career progression. Entering HE from PP is less common. If universities are to fully benefit from practitioners expertise, and practitioners in turn are to achieve their career potential, universities need to recognise and support their specific needs and requirements.

Through this study I add to the discussion and to what is known providing an alternative view from university academics from practice, enabling insights and additional understanding to be gained from these research findings.

2.7 Knowledge Gaps

Through the literature reviewed I recognise threshold concepts (Meyer and Land 2005) may feature as part of the transition process, the learning experience. Here this is outside the scope of this inquiry. Unlike Brown, *et al* (2021:1) I believe this concept can continue to be applied specifically in relation to transition experiences. There is an opportunity for future research to use threshold concepts to further understand the experience of transition of university academics from practice. Here there is a need to manage this study for clear understanding to be gained, returned and the research questions formed.

Not discussed in all the literature reviewed is the transition experience of professional practitioners making the move to become a university academic from their perspectives and beyond a few professions as mentioned earlier. The empirical evidence regarding the experience of transition once inside academic life, from the perspectives of university academics from practice is meagre. As is the evidence related to practitioners career progression beyond that of initial teaching. There is a need to gain further understanding about a group of university academics from practice who move to work in higher

education and to fill the knowledge gaps found existing through this review. Emerging themes relating to the experience of transition, transition, the game, work, and emotion stirred curiosity. Themes and lenses drawn on later to view and understand the phenomenon here.

2.8 Literature Review Summary

I acknowledge that academic life and work might not suit all professional practitioners and that these feelings are likely to become evident during the early phase of transition. But for others the experience of transition to become a university academic from the professional field has the potential to reveal another, more positive, side as well as developing understanding about the experience of transition from different perspectives.

From reviewed literature transition is clearly important requiring the right type of support. It can be viewed not only as an individual first-hand experience but as entering a 'game' in academic life where emotions are part of the process. But, as found, even though professional practitioners are accomplished in the professional field, have professional standing, and are required by higher education institutions they might find that they struggle in making a successful transition to academic life and work. Particularly, if not adequately supported or mentored by experienced and appropriate role models.

Generally, although becoming an academic exists in the discourse, practitioners becoming university academics and entering the fulness of academic life and work, are less known. Here, the opportunity is presented to understand more, build-on from what is known about this group, and to identify enhancements as well as good practice. Understanding transition and university academics from practice is important. This group are part of academic life and work reproducing the field of practice by developing future generations of practitioners. As seen in this chapter, researchers who study transitional experiences from stories and reflections of university academics argue, as I do, there remains more to be done. This study makes a new and useful contribution.

To summarise, the notion of professional practitioners within academic life showed a group of individuals who had journeyed along a professional route that led them into academic work and institutions. Practitioners did so at a point in their life’s course and career when being able to make the move was possible and maybe a risk. Transition was more than a move from one job role to another. It encompassed a career change from professional life to academic life and a work role transition. Transition was not without its risks and understanding practitioners through their own perspectives, and through the experience of transition, is needed.

Therefore, the goal of my thesis here is to focus on gaining understanding, insights and the perceptions of university academics from practice specifically their experiences, and the evolving experience, an often-forgotten component in research studies on transition and academic careers. I am curious to understand how professional practitioners perceive the experience first-hand and more importantly how the experience of transition evolves over the course of the first five years, the early years of transition. But also, as an academic developer, to identify better ways of practice and integration of newcomers with academic communities and the support needed. At this point, an initial view of the concept of becoming a university academic from practice, as interpreted from this review, is visualised, and shown in Fig 3 as:



Figure 3. The Concept of Becoming and Academic from Practice: An Initial View

From this conceptualisation the experience of professional practitioners making the move to become university academics can be understood through the experience of transition, professional practitioners, being/becoming a university academic and the workplace of higher education (post-92's). Next, this chapter deals with transition as a gap in the literature showing the need for a conceptual framework to address this. I present the conceptual framework and explain why the literature about becoming a university academic from professional practice needs the lens of transition but also to consider the 'game' (Lucas 2006) and emotions.

2.9 Conceptual Framework

As identified in Chapter 1, transition to becoming university lecturers is known through previous studies mainly in a few fields. This section holistically explores specifically what is known about the experience of transition, particularly transition in the context of academic life or as part of a career change outside of a few disciplines. Here the gaps in knowledge become apparent, the reason for this research identified, and a mandate created for the use of a conceptual framework and the use of a theoretical lens through which to view the experience of transition. Based on emerging theme's structure is given to understanding the experience of transition and to the framing of this inquiry here.

Many different frameworks exist through which the phenomenon of this study could be viewed and understood but there was no one framework that could be drawn on here as a 'blueprint'. As such, this section draws on different concepts, theory, and models to develop the conceptual framework for this inquiry focusing on three emerging themes from the review: transition, game, and work and emotion. Themes used here to organise this section of the chapter.

Although I had created a concept map as presented in the last section, and as Smyth (2004:1) affirmed 'concepts maps provided some assistance but provided insufficient structure' for the purpose of a research study seeking to understand the nature of the phenomenon here. From the research literature reviewed it was evident that different qualitative researchers approached framing their studies in a variety of ways. I began by defining a conceptual framework suitable for this inquiry and although initial concepts

(labels) 'give meaning and enable an individual to categorize and interpret a phenomenon' (McKenna 1997:7; Savin-Baden Major 2013:137) this was not sufficient to define the framework designed and used in this study. Consequently, I found Rudestam and Newton (1992:6) presented a conceptual framework as a:

'Simply a less developed form of a theory, consists of statements that link abstract concepts to empirical data. Theories and conceptual frameworks are developed to account for or describe abstract phenomena that occur under similar conditions'

Here the experience of transition to become a university academic from practice is accounted for and described drawing from emerging themes and concepts found existing in the literature reviewed. The conceptual framework is defined here as 'a collection of general but related concepts from the literature that serve as a partial background for the study and that support the need for investigating the research question' (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013:138). As Smyth (2004:164) highlighted a drawback of using such a research approach is that 'no research can expect that all the data will be analysed using the framework without the risk of limiting the results of the investigation'. A point I do not consider problematic for this study as I remain open to this inquiry discovering new insights and understanding through the findings. Three themes provide the structure for this research and are used to interpret, think about, and reflect on findings: transition, the game, work, and emotions as presented next.

2.9.1 Transition

This section is central to this study and as such presented through transition: theory, cycles, phases and conceptualised.

2.9.1.1 Theory

Getting early transition right was known to be important especially 'if early socialisation is deficient, then the longer-term prospect for higher education is a worrying one' (Knight 2002:37), a claim that holds. But as Ecclestone, *et al* (2010:2) highlighted 'the research field around transitions is fragmented both historically and between disciplines theoretical orientations' and although a unitary view did not exist this was not

problematic. From the review it was evident that transition 'has numerous every day and theoretical meanings' (Ecclestone, *et al* 2010:2) and involves major life events which I recognise from practice and personally. Events that involve people changing which can also alter the 'sense of who they are ... [as they] take on a new occupational role or emigrate to a new country' (Ecclestone, *et al* 2010:2), which is likely to be found occurring during the study of the phenomenon in this inquiry. Ecclestone, *et al* (2002:2) suggested 'such transitions can lead to profound change' for some but for others the experience might be found to be 'unsettling, difficult and unproductive' as well as risky. Consequently, supporting and managing transitions has become the focus of growing interest amongst policy makers, social services and education practitioners and researchers in the UK.' (Ecclestone, *et al* 2010:4) and seen here as a growing element of my role as an academic developer but also of personal interest.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, little is known about the experience of transition to become a university academic from practice but understanding transition and the change to a new work role are important and topical. Nicholson (1984:172) presented the theory of work role transitions and reported this 'can have profound significance for the future development of individuals and their organizations'. Practitioners moving from professional life to academic life were, as I view it, engaging in transition from one work role to another making this theory of interest here. Nicholson (1984:172) offered a view of work role transitions through a 'Schematic Summary Showing Relationships of Determinants in the Theory of Work Role Transitions', shown in Fig. 4 below.

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Figure 4. Schematic Summary Showing Relationships of Determinants in the Theory of Work Role Transitions (Nicholson 1984)

This theory provided a view of the transition process illustrating that modes of 'adjustment' formed part of the experience with the individual at the centre of the diagram moving and being impacted by transition in different ways. Adjustment includes 'individual effects, behavioral and dispositional' (Nicholson 1984:172), elements. The central focus was placed on the 'individual differences in the characteristics of people and the transitions they undergo mediate the relationships of change vs. stability and individual vs. situational adjustment' (Nicholson 1984:172). Practitioners are likely to be found mediating relationships as part of transition. This theory places the individual centrally enabling the 'dynamic changes in outcome of transition' (Nicholson 1984:194) to be viewed and interpreted. Nicholson (1984:187) proposed at a general level 'more extreme values on any of the proposed determinants of adjustment will take precedence over less extreme values. For example, close constraints on discretion, high novelty of demands, compulsive induction processes, deeply ingrained prior socialized dispositions, powerfully activated motives, or highly charged affective reactions will predominate over weaker influences', which I recognise may surface through this study.

This scholar claimed empirical research opportunities were opened to explore or test this theory in different contexts. From the review it was evident this theory had not been used so far to study the phenomenon of this inquiry or to gain understanding of the experience of transition, or the evolving experience, from perspectives of university

academics from practice. There seemed to be value in this theory for use when interpreting the findings of this research study particularly as it suggested that during a work role transition people passed through five stages in that process: temporary shifts in adjustment, replication, determination, exploration, lifespan, and career development. Missing was timescale, emotions at work and application to new university academics from the professional field or to their evolving experience.

Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (1998:46) offered an in-service, or inside academic life, view of a transition cycle in higher education which was useful. These scholars discussed transition through reference to Nicholson's (1990:87-92) transition cycle as depicted in Fig. 5 below. This was the only example I found of academic transition cycles previously presented for academic life detailing task, problems, and remedies. One depicting the existence of four transition phases: preparation; encounter; adjustment and stabilization.

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Figure 5. The Transition Cycle, Tasks, Problems and Strategies (Nicholson 1990)

Additionally, from the use of Nicholson's (1990) model other elements within transition to academic life were presented through associated tasks/goals, problems/pitfalls and strategies/remedies applicable to practice. Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (1998:45) agreed with the number of phases proposed but highlighted those phases are not 'mutually exclusive or linear', which I recognise from my own practice and experiences. As such, new university academics may not systematically follow a step-by-step transition process by starting one phase and completing this before moving neatly onto the next. On the

contrary, as Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (1998:45) noted, in reality academic workplaces involved ‘the need to learn the nature and content of the job quickly, often at the same time as doing it and with little support available’ which, as these scholars suggest, and as my own personal experience shows, ‘can collapse the four phases into one’ at different points of time. Making the transition from professional life to academic life is likely to have its own differences. Differences this model does not include or the transition process mirror identically.

2.9.1.2 Cycles

Williams (1999) extended understanding of transition through a model related to a ‘transition cycle’. This model consists of five phases, and he argued the first phase began with a ‘first shock’ followed by: provisional adjustment; inner contradictions; inner crisis; and ended with a period of reconstruction and recovery as illustrated in Fig. 6. This model applied to life events linked to new job roles and career change not specifically to academic careers. However, I considered the concept of phases of a transition cycle relevant to gaining an understanding of career moves generally and more specifically to the experience of transition connected to a new job role and change of career.

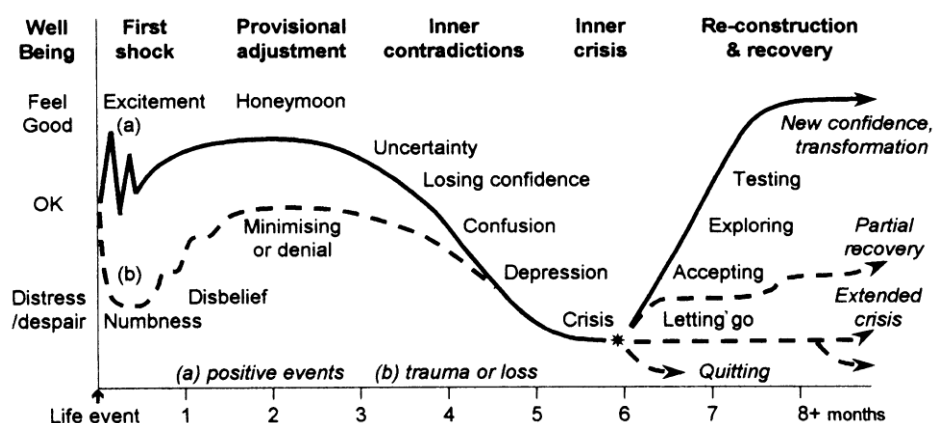


Figure 6. Williams (1999) Phases and features of the Transition Cycle (adapted from Hopson 1976)

Analysis showed this model was similar to Nicholson’s (1990) model, but Williams (1999) advanced understanding by showing the pitfalls and problems as well as where these were located. Transition was visually represented through a line termed ‘positive events’

(a) and balanced by another termed 'trauma or loss' (b). I found this model useful because it provides for both the positive and negative events that ran alongside a timeline. In practice, this model may help predict when and where support interventions are needed and what to be aware of as part of a transitional experience. The problem, as I recognise from this review, and identify from my own personal transition experience, is that this model was presented through an eight-month timescale with little known after that period about transition.

In relation to a transition to academic life, and the evolving transitional experience, eight months is not considered here to be sufficient time to complete a transition process. Nor was it enough time to develop an academic career or reach the fullness of academic life. Although I found this to be a useful model, it was not completely representative of the true length of time it takes to adjust to academic life, careers, or roles. But, unlike, Nicholson's (1990) model Williams (1999) 'transition cycle' provided an outside view that could be generically applied to a career change and move. One I deemed to be relevant to academic life as well as professional life. This model was useful and fitting because it specifically related to career changers and was not constrained to new academics using research routes to gain access to academic work and careers as Blaxter, Hughes and Tights' (1998) previous work had mainly done.

Williams (1999) 'transition cycle' was designed to be of practical use to those interested in 'helping [individuals] survive and thrive in changing organisations' (Williams 1999) as well as those interested in organisations dealing with change. For these reasons, this made Williams (1999) 'transition cycle' relevant and of appeal for this inquiry. The model conflicted with views of other scholars (Blaxter, Hughes and Tights 1998:46) because the starting phase for transition was presented as a 'first shock' rather than 'preparation'. Also, views differed to the Work Role Transition theory offered by Nicholson (1984) in that the number and types of 'adjustment' varied.

Differences in terms were to be expected but the contrast between a first shock, preparation and replication are stark. A first shock led to thinking this might mean first surprise, experience or something upsetting or pleasing, agreeable or stressful. On the

other hand, preparation indicates a process of getting ready for something. Replication was explained as 'the most steady state' (Nicholson 1984:185). These three terms are different revealing the difficulty in trying to understand transition, processes, cycles, and phases, without the existence of a unified consensus or blueprint to apply.

2.9.1.3 Phases

Bridges (2009:5) represented the 'transition cycle' more generally. The analysis of this model, known as 'The Three Phases of Transition' (Bridges 2009:5), found it contradicted the first three and suggested that the first phase began with an 'ending, losing and letting go' not a first shock, preparation or even adjustment. However, this transition cycle provides a simplified version illustrating the transitional journey as a three-phase process depicted in Fig. 7. Here the middle phase is known as 'the neutral zone' and the end phase as 'the new beginning':

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Figure 7. The Three Phases of Transition (Bridges 2009)

Bridges (2009:4) believed three phases ran in turn. The first: 'ending, losing and letting go' was presented as the first transition phase and one that began with an 'ending'. Ending was viewed as the point where people are known to start 'letting go of the old ways and the old identity' (Bridges 2009:4). An important period in transition where others needed to 'help people to deal with their losses' (Bridges 2009:4) or change. In relation to transition, this model suggested old ways of professional life and professional identities needed to be let go of during the process of transition. This type of requirement or letting go, as I viewed it, might cause a sense of loss and be the place where the right

support interventions were required for professional practitioners as they moved role, changed careers, and transitioned to and evolved within academic life.

The second phase, referred to as a 'neutral zone' by (2009:5) was highlighted as the place where the old is gone but the new is not quite fully operational. It is here that 'critical psychological realignments and repatternings' (Bridges 2009:5) are known to take place. Psychological losses Bridge's (2009:5) noted as favoured locations, corporate identity tied to activities people loved, 'esprit de corps' coming from 'shared interests and involvement in cutting-edge activity' for example. Areas that institutions and academic communities needed to provide transitional support for during what was likely to be a difficult period, and phase, of the transition process for new university academics from practice to pass through. But it would not be enough for institutions to understand this, professional practitioners needed to be aware and manage their process of transition.

A new beginning was shown as the last transition phase rather than an end of the process. Bridges (2009:5) highlighted this involved 'coming out of the transition and making a new beginning', the time when the change potentially began to work. This last phase was known as the time when individuals 'develop a new identity, experience the new energy and discover a new sense of purpose'. In the context of this study, this was seen as a phase that continued and required ongoing, and onward, support as well as other opportunities and avenues to advance to. For those university academics from practice changing careers this phase seems to suggest that the end arrives when a new identity, an academic identity, is developed. Also, when practitioners feel motivated and part of academic life. But, without the perspectives of practitioners this cannot be fully confirmed or understood in context.

Without a unified view, or consensus, it is difficult to gain a clear understanding of transition, and particularly the number of phases within the transition cycle, generally or more specifically when related to academic life. The theory and models here were found to have their own merits and make a useful contribution to the discussion surrounding transition. It remains that the perspectives of practitioners are missing. This is not viewed here as a problem but rather this gap gives rise to an opportunity for this study

to take from transition theory, cycles and models using these findings to add to discussions by exploring, and building-on, from what is known. This study is designed for that purpose and aims to enrich understanding and knowledge from the perspectives of practitioners direct experiences of transition from professional life to academic life.

2.9.1.4 Combined

Having identified the absence of a unified view regarding a starting point of the transition process, this continued throughout the evaluation of the other phases: namely, the second, middle and end phases. From this review, no consensus was found on a range of areas: terminology; features; the length of time it took to pass through each, or all, transition phases; and feelings. Therefore, for the purposes of this research study, and to frame transition, I combined the three models as one transition cycle within the three agreed phases: start; middle; and end acknowledging that Nicholson's (1984) Work Role Transition Theory was useful and could be used as a lens when interpreting phases and findings of this study, as shown in Fig. 8 below. I termed this here as Conceptualising the Phases of Transition, a combined view:

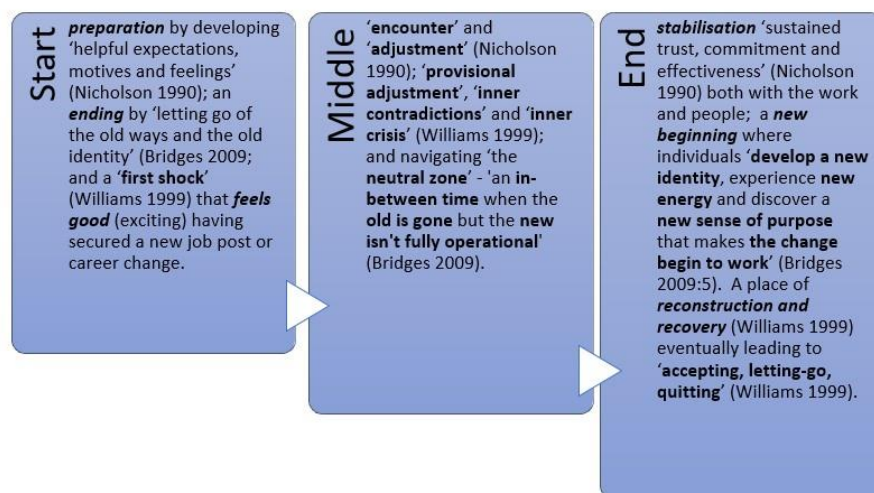


Figure 8. Conceptualising the Phases of Transition: A Combined View

This combined view illustrates the experience of transition that university academics from practice might journey through from professional life to academic life. By taking and adapting the various contributions (Blaxter, Hughes, Tight 1998; Nicholson 1990; Williams 1999; and Bridges 2009) and recognising that 'adjustment' (Nicholson, 1984)

was part of the transition process I was able to combine this thinking and produce a visualisation and framing that helps to understand the experience of transition prior to undertaking research. This brings together different views about the transition process and transition cycle creating a combined model focused on transitions, specifically the experience of transition triggered by a career change and moving job role. As such, this helps define transition here as ‘a process by which people unplug from an old world and plug into a new world’ (Bridges 2009:5). In other words, unplugging from professional life and work and plugging into a new world, academic life and work.

Having conceptualised transition above reflection, further analysis led me to see the experience of transition placed on a timeline. It is not clear how long the timeline would be for practitioners moving to academic life and work, the ‘moment’ they spent working in higher education. Recognising the period in this inquiry related to the first five years in post I added to the conceptualisation a timeline integrating this with the phases of transition. I present this new model here and term as the ‘Three Phased Integrated Transition Cycle’, Fig. 9.

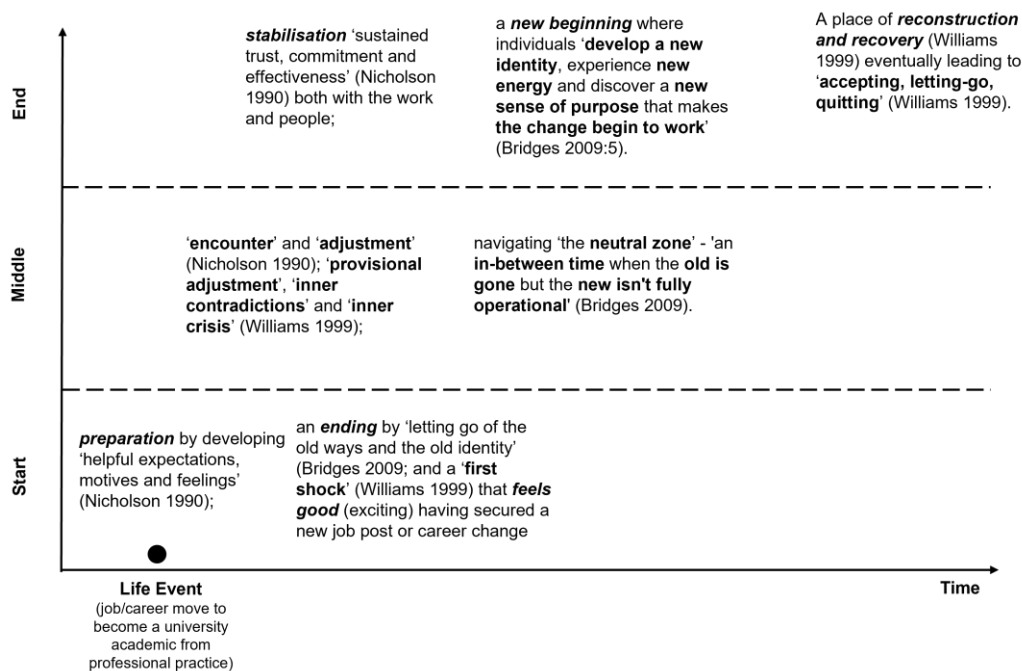


Figure 9. Three Phased Integrated Transition Cycle

Here the three phases (start, middle and end) and time are combined into one helping to understand and further conceptualise the experience of transition. This conceptualisation of the transitional cycle adds to what is known about the phenomenon providing a theoretical lens through which findings of this inquiry can be understood, interpreted, and used to help when communicating the experience of transition later in this thesis. I am not claiming this model represents the exact experience of transition or that it is the precise journey that professional practitioners will go through. But this model of the combined transition cycle provides a useful lens through which the experience of transition can be viewed and considered as part of this study. As such, transition theory and models presented here were used to help make sense of the early experience of transition, the transitional journey, and compared with practitioner perceptions to gain further understanding and insight.

Following the earlier review of literature, the notion of a 'game' emerged as a theme, and this becomes the focus of the next section and framing of this inquiry.

2.9.2 The Game

Through reviewed literature my attention and curiosity was drawn to the notion of elements of academic work being viewed as a 'game in academic life' (Lucas 2006) in relation to research but it was not clear if this thinking applied also to the other key area of academic work, teaching and the experience of transition of new university academics from the professional field. Lucas's (2006) work stemmed from research projects. This scholars study found there was no shortage in 'sporting metaphors' provided by the findings or when the subject was being investigated hence the concept of 'the game in academic life' (Lucas 2006:2) emerged and a connection made to Bourdieu's thinking and research work and the provision of an 'insiders view of university research' (Lucas 2006:3). Also 'its management and organization during a period of rapid change', which as I see has similarities to university teaching. The thinking was relevant to this study because Lucas (2006:3) provided a view in relation to academic careers in changing times. The notion of academic life being seen metaphorically as a 'sport' began to shed further light on the competitive nature of this environment but from a research perspective

rather than a teaching perspective. Nevertheless, practitioners making the transition to academic life were entering this space and might be considered joining the new culture and work which others might view in terms of a game or play but newcomers might, or might not, agree.

This led to discovering the appeal of Pierre Bourdieu's work who, as I learned, was commonly described as a scholar who was 'an outsider who became an insider' (Smith 2020:3). The terms 'outsider' and 'insider' captured my curiosity and thinking because of the nature of this inquiry and what I had already described this study as in Chapter 1, a curious mix of insider outsider research. Wacquant (1992:5) offered an approach to use when thinking about findings of a study aligned to Bourdieu's work. This scholar opened the opportunity 'for transferring knowledge gleaned in one area of inquiry into another' by drawing on different ways of thinking about it. Wacquant (1992:5) suggested thinking more deeply and widely about the knowledge found. Smith (2020:11) adds this practice could be used to make, or suggest, improvements. Both scholars highlight the notion of 'academic habitus' as a thinking tool and one known to be applicable to the fields of education, sociology and academic development making it appropriate for use here. (Smith 2020:1) suggested a focus on 'three key notions informing [Bourdieu's] labour's – habitus, field, and capital' which are relevant to the study of the phenomenon here. I recognised this reflective thinking tool would assist and potentially provide new insight into systems of integrating the existing community and incoming practitioners to deliver quality higher education in practice.

Here *habitus* is not viewed narrowly as a habit (Smith 2020:1). I followed the thinking that *habitus* is more like a disposition rather than habit. In other words, disposition for the 'readiness to sense and know' (Sach 2001; Smith 2020:1) and understand the experience of transition. Smith (2020:1) stated this 'helps to explain' what it is possible to identify in a situation or event as I view it here. (Smith 2020:1) pointed out that as a thinking tool, *habitus* did 'not stand on its own' because of the connection to the notions of capital, field and practice. To define these terms I follow the definitions below:

Capital	a mix of capitals taken in the broadest sense to include informational and cultural capital. <u>'knowledge of one kind or another'</u> (Jenkins 1992).
Field	the 'social space in which interactions, transactions and events take place' (Bourdieu) the 'field of knowledge', academic life and work here. The terrain on which a 'game ... is played' (Smith 2020).
Practice	the 'acts embodying shared rules and processes' (Smith 2020), the way people act and think in professional and academic life.

I found terms connected to *habitus* useful as reflective thinking tools. But, as Jawitz (2009:249) highlighted, and as I recognise, 'the inclusion of professional capital, and its value', was missing but important to this study and professional practitioners. The knowledge and practice capital that university academics from practice bring to academic life forming part of the inquiry. Smith (2020:1) emphasised 'we cannot understand the practices of actors in terms of their habituses alone' because that is only part of the equation. This thinking provides a tool to further interpret the experience of transition combining and gain insight and understanding of the game.

Considering habitus and specifically the field as the terrain to which newcomers arrive led me to analysing this in the context of academic life and work. Drawing on Lucas's (2006:63) work specifically 'academic habitus' where the 'trajectory of agents in academic life' was highlighted this discovery enabled me to use these ideas here to interpret, map and create an illustration of the pathway used by practitioners to enter academic life, the 'professional route' (Boden, Epstein and Kenway 2005:27) as mentioned earlier in this chapter. A map depicting the entry place, level, and fields that practitioners arrive from and to during transition. Fig. 10 provides this new interpretation representing it as 'Academic Life: Fields of Transition':

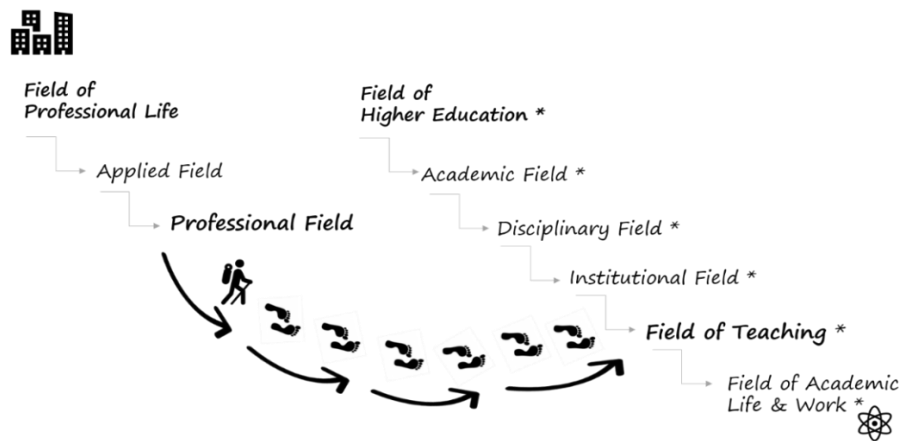


Figure 10. Academic Life: Fields of Transition

Here the landscape to academic life from professional life can be seen. On one side, it is possible to identify the field of professional life, the place that practitioners transition from and on the other, the field of higher education, the landscape that practitioners transition to. The places known where ‘struggles’ exist are identifiable and highlighted by the asterisks and emotion is dealt with later in this section. Here this view might initially appear as a relatively straightforward journey involving a step across from one working environment to another. Leaving the ‘professional field’ to go to another workplace and starting in the ‘field of teaching’.

In one sense, this transition might potentially look like a shorter route to academic life and work, a fast-track. But on closer inspection, it highlights this type of cross-over involves missing out passages and transitions through several fields within the overall field of higher education: the academic, disciplinary, and institutional. Practitioners moving from fields of professional life to academic life risk missing the important aspects of socialisation, learning, networking, and nurturing that occurs as part of an academic community in comparison to their counterparts entering via the research route. This type of journey may be viewed as good on one hand but on the other it highlights key information and knowledge might be missed out as part of this type of transition process, as found later.

Academic life emerged as a competitive environment and a metaphorical 'game' that was different and one that might contrast with professional life, fields, and culture. Blackmore (2016:1) highlighted the difference between researchers who are known to need to 'bid feverishly and against the odds for the next crumb of funding and educators (teachers) who are 'encouraged to apply for prizes for excellence in teaching by showing that they are better than the colleagues with whom they often share their work' (Blackmore 2016:1), an image of a sporting culture here. It is not surprising that Lucas's (2006) view of academic life is metaphorically framed as a 'game', albeit from the research perspective. But this review highlights two aspects of academic work and life opening a gap where teaching here can be considered as part of another 'game in academic life'. Based on an analysis of the limited literature available about the game of academic life in relation to teaching or university academics from practice, it appears defensible to also equate this entry to academic life for them as engagement in a 'game'. A notion I take forwards as part of the thinking tools for use in this study to understand transition.

Practitioners involved in transition are unlikely to view entry to academic life as a game and may not consider the field of teaching in this way. I recall I did not see higher education like that but accept that other practitioners might. Billot and King (2015:261) stated the 'rules of the game' are often not easy to identify for new academics. It is evident from the review that university academics from practice, as Lucas (2006:57) through Bourdieu (1998:25) highlighted, need to have 'a *'feel'* for the game', be equipped for '*anticipating* the future of the game' and understand what 'is inscribed in the present state of play' as part of transition. Making transition and changing careers from professional to academic fields is shown to involve a learning experience, catching up, and engagement 'in a process of intellectual discovery' (Grant and Sherrington 2006:10) whilst making sense of the new world of work. As little exists in the literature with regards to the teaching game in academic life the opportunity is provided for this study to gain understanding and insight from an alternative perspective.

2.9.3 Work and Emotion

Each field is known to contain its own 'struggles' as Lucas (2006) points out through reference to Bourdieu (1993:72):

'in every field we know that we will find a struggle, the specific forms of which have to be looked for each time, between the newcomer who tries to break through the entry barrier and the dominant agent who will try to defend the monopoly and keep out competition'

Newcomers cannot be expected to know of the struggles in the fields they enter within academic life to work, the forms these struggles take or even to look out for them. Particularly having by-passed academic fields before landing directly in the field of teaching. The term struggle suggested that academic life involves engaging, or contending, with difficulties or problems particularly the known restraints or constraints that exist and are considered problematic. It is not clear from the review what the precise struggles might be in the context of professional practitioners. Even if it was clearer, then the inside views might be at odds with practitioners own views or even with this type of new academic considering themselves as competitors. In the main, and as mentioned earlier, practitioners motivation to enter higher education is to teach others and share experiences so practitioners might not consider they have entered a highly competitive world. Academics from practice are not seen to be a group of people who have forced themselves upon higher education, but members of a professional field invited to cross-over. This characterisation does not compare with the image of needing to 'break in' or 'break through' existing barriers but it does show where differences or conflicts might be during the transitional journey.

It is not clear who the 'dominant agents' are but Bourdieu's (1993:72) view, as Lucas (2006:57) showed, potential risks seem to be unknown to practitioners as they make an early transition. Elements that could help or hinder a successful move especially if 'the struggle is over boundaries and who is legitimated to enter' (Lucas 2006:57) or progress. For practitioners who gain access, and who are working in higher education currently,

this might not initially be problematic for transition but as the journey evolves, questioning of their legitimacy might occur, as discussed earlier.

Struggles as well as aspects of academic work, identity, and culture, highlighted the existence of different types of emotions within academic life and transition. Subsequently, as I considered emotion further it led to acknowledging both emotion and feelings are likely to be important components within the evolving experience of transition. Kidd (1998:275) argued, and as I recognised here, 'greater attention [should] be given to the role of emotion in career development' which here includes the transition process and experience, but little exists in relation to career development or management for university academics from practice as found through this review. The move from professional practice to academic life is part of a continuing career for practitioners. An extension to a working life and career that formed before as well as during the time they spend in higher education and in academic life.

Theory relating to workplaces and employment over the last few decades, and especially due to changes in the employment contexts in that time, showed concern 'with understanding adult work-role transitions' (Kidd 1998:275) which is fitting for this inquiry. Kidd (1998:275) suggested, as I considered appropriate, that viewing career management needed 'to take more account of the feelings and emotions underlying career transitions' and 'understanding changes to individual's psychological contracts with their employing organizations' (Kidd 1998:275). Whilst I am not intending to include psychological contracts as part of the scope of this study, I recognise these theories or models exist showing impacts on emotions and feelings, opening future research paths related to transition experiences. Kidd (1998:286), invited practitioners and researchers to engage with the concept of "emotional labour", in other words the emotional work required during transition. But from the review it is not clear how practitioner emotions or feelings fit the early transition cycle presenting a gap and a chance here to use 'new ways of understanding emotional experience' (Kidd 1998:286) by a holistic view of emotions during the experience of transition.

Miller (2007:255) suggested 'workplace emotion is multifaceted and complex, and individuals have strong feelings about what they do and who they do it with', which I recognise. It is likely that how practitioners feel in academic life and work is likely to impact on the experience of transition. Oatley and Jenkins (1992:78) argued 'interrelating research on emotions from several disciplines helps to demonstrate not only that emotions can be studied, but also that they are of considerable importance in psychological function and dysfunction'. In other words, the ability of people to achieve their goals personally and as part of the work environment or community they interact with. Although this study is not specifically about emotions, I do not deny that emotion and feelings have an important part to play in the transition process. From reviewed literature it is evident that a large body of knowledge exists in relation to emotions at work and shows this as a growing area of interest and research.

Zapf, *et al* (2010:371) emphasised the concept of emotions at work was 'a neglected area' in qualitative research. Emotion at work is a broad notion spanning across research and practice areas connecting to employee emotional regulation, desired emotions, emotions organisations expect, positive emotions, negative emotions, handling emotions, emotional sensitivity, sympathy, controlling emotions, emotional dissonance, emotion management, etc. Scholars highlight links between emotion and stress in organisational settings, health and well-being, conflicts, time pressures and feeling happy (or not) comparing with earlier findings and discussions in this chapter. Koch and Alder (2018:524) raised emotional exhaustion and innovation at work as major topics of interests to researchers and organisations because topical issues such as well-being in innovative and creative workplaces of which universities are. Koch and Alder (2018:524) highlight those negative impacts of emotions are known to lead to 'reduced job performance, higher turnover rates, mental disorders, physical illness, and even morbidity in the long run', hence why this topic is important to understand.

A positive emotion found was 'passion' and one that through my own academic practice that I hear used in contemporary higher education. Neumann (2006) through a research study relating to recently employed university professors and teachers mentioned some

‘strive to teach in ways that awaken love for the learning of particular subjects in their students but they rarely talk in public of their own intellectual loves, including how passion (or its absence)’ impacts on their work (Neumann 2006:381). Here stories of transitional experiences might shed new light. Less clear was the range of existing emotions which would be applicable to view the experience of transition through or to compare findings with. Briner (1999:327) considered multiple roles of emotions at work adapting the work of Ortony, Clore, and Collins (1988) to present some adjectives that described emotions, which I present below in Fig. 11:

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Figure 11. Multiple Roles of Emotions At Work (Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988)

I found the emotions and examples listed here useful and some have similarities with those in this review and appear to connect with the notion of ‘feel good’, ‘ok’ or ‘distress/despair’ as seen through Williams (1999) transition cycle features. As for the concept of time, Briner (1999:326) highlighted that some emotions or reactions to an event might be short-term, longer-term, or even longer lasting. However, other than this broad understanding it was not clear from the review how long these emotions lasted,

when they begin, what triggers them or how they apply to the phenomenon in this inquiry. But as Briner (1999:326) pointed out, and as I recognise, 'even on superficial inspection [of the examples listed] it is quite obvious that all these emotions may be experienced by people at work'. I found it striking how diverse and numerous the range of emotions are in connection to work and transition extending beyond the more commonly known, stress, excitement, and satisfaction. Here the range of emotions listed are considered relevant and of use when comparing the findings of this inquiry with what is known.

Given that, as Scheer (2012:195) found through a research study, emotion 'has been notoriously difficult to pin down and define it is generally agreed that emotions are something people experience and something they do'. I follow behind that definition here. I am aware that emotions are not static, individual and that over time they are likely to change or be changed given different work and personal situations. As such, emotion was found relevant to this study and the inquiry is designed to be open to the discovery of a range of emotions (and feelings) as part of understanding the experience of transition.

2.9.4 The Need for This Study

This review presented and reviewed a collection of concepts that provide an initial background for the study of the experience of transition to become a university academic from professional practice. A selection of different but related concepts from the research and practice-based literature have been presented and discussed. An overview of these concepts was provided to guide scholars and practitioners in the experience of transition research and practice. This section provides key concepts aligned to the experience of transition and combined thinking and models to further elucidate and understand more deeply the transition process, cycles, and experience including the game in academic life and work and emotions.

Through this review I presented several important approaches to transition experiences and highlighted different factors identified from the literature review. Those considered important in developing understanding. Now the opportunity exists to discover more

about a group of university academics from practice, experts from the professional field who move to higher education to work and who change career direction as part of that process later in their working lives. From the review it was evident that not enough was known about practitioners or their transition to, and through, academic life. This opens space for this research and provided scope to develop this study and to understand more about the experience of transition beyond that of a few disciplinary areas.

The review showed that politics, discipline, institutional environment, race, gender, and other elements were connected to transition and potentially to transition experiences. Whilst I appreciate these topics could be important to understand, or to view the experience of transition through, here they were not deemed of significant importance. This is because all participants in this study came from a cross section of disciplines, all were employed as full-time academics in post-92 institutions and not employed based on age, race, gender, or prior academic experience. Culture however is included because this emerged as an important part of academic life relevant here and to the academic working environment through this review. Other themes are open for future research studies to develop and view the experience of transition through. To gain further understanding of the phenomenon here, and the evolving experience, the perspectives of professional practitioners are important and required.

Gaining an understanding of the experience of transition is an interesting concept to grasp hold of because, as the review showed positive life events such as a new job or career change can have 'as much potential for psychological disruption as negative events' (Williams 1999). I argue here that exploring the experience of transition has potential to add additional insights, bring about new understandings and shed new light as well as identify best practice from the stories that new university academics share about their own individual journeys. This resulted.

2.10 Chapter Conclusion

Reviewing literature and contributions made by scholars and practitioners this far relating to the phenomenon and research questions revealed transition experiences as complex, individual, and intricate but also a journey. One where entering academic life from

practice is less common and less is known about it. Particularly when the experience of transition is considered from the angle of a 'career change' to higher education. Although literature lacked specific details from perspectives of practitioners in relation to transitions to academic life and work, or specific careers advice for these new university academics, richness was found in complementary literature. This related to notions of transition cycles which this research draws on as well as from scholarly work to conceptually frame this inquiry.

Triggered by life events, transition brings changes that are large, small, or of an unknown scale but it can also involve 'serious hazards and windows of opportunity for growth' (Williams 1999). Through practitioner perspectives this research hopes to gain an appreciation of the experience of transition and understand it better within the context of academic life. Various elements have been dealt with in the literature already and the findings used to conceptualise transition, practitioners, and academic life within the context of this inquiry. Here the experience of transition is conceptualised as transition, the game and work and emotions. An experience encompassing three transition *phases*, consisting of: a start; a middle; and an ending. The experience of transition, as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, is defined as 'a process by which people unplug from an old world and plug into a new world' (Bridges 2009:5).

It is acknowledged that each of the transition phases contain their own features and emotions brought into the transition process by the individuals involved in making the move. Practitioners are seen as a group of people (social actors) taking the 'professional route' (Boden, Epstein and Kenway 2005:27) into academic life, work, and careers in the field of higher education. Academic life is seen as the place where the transition occurs, where it continues to evolve, but also as the site where practitioners come into 'being' an academic during the time spent learning, working and in-service in the academic community. Metaphorically, academic life is framed as 'a game' drawing from Lucas (2006).

This chapter established, and justified, the need for this research and gives direction to a general research question to explore what is the experience of professional practitioners

making the transition to become an academic? Operationalising this study using this framing here allows the inquiry to pursue understanding important stuff in relation a subgroup of the academic community. A group that is still relatively unknown. The next chapter presents the methodology and research methods to complete the conceptual framework, and theoretical framing, of this research study. It is on this framing that the study proceeds.

Part I

Chapter 3 - Methodology: Framing and Strategy

‘Research is creating new knowledge’
– *Neil Armstrong* -

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the final of the three lead-in chapters completing the conceptual framework and theoretical underpinning for this study. Here it serves to help readers understand how this research was designed to address the primary research question: what is the experience of professional practitioners making the transition to become an academic? Also to address two sub-questions: how can the experience of transition from practice to academic life be better understood; and how can this understanding lead to a better system of integrating the existing academic community and incoming practitioners as a team to deliver quality higher education?

My own positionality in relation to various worldviews, models for thinking about research, and this study are made clear here. I acknowledge that I did not enter the research space alone because the design of the research strategy meant I had to draw on the experiences, knowledge, traditions, and practices of 'a distinct interpretative community' (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:21). A consideration of methodological issues and theoretical perspectives (Crotty 1998:2) are provided in this chapter. Readers are helped to understand how word data was gathered, analysed (Silverman 2005:303), and how good quality research assured. This chapter has defined, described, and discussed the 'theories on which the methods rest' (Silverman 2005:303). Addressed also are the ethical issues related to conducting a research inquiry of this nature.

This study was framed to provide an engaging mix of 'real-world' (Robson 2002:4), 'insider', and 'outsider' (Robson 2002:382) perspectives: a framing that shaped a fitting and robust study providing the basis on which this inquiry proceeded. The conceptual framework and research strategies employed were designed to ensure this thesis can be judged as quality and capable of making an original contribution to knowledge.

3.0 Overview and Background

Having identified research was needed to understand more about the experience of transition to become university academics from practice, I began the design of this inquiry from a position of reflection and thinking. Consideration was given to the research question and focused on the 'best' research strategy to use here to gain understanding as discussed later. From the earlier literature review it was evident that the experience of transition, and specifically the journey of professional practitioners into academic life and work, was under-researched. Less was known about this community than of the more conventional route to become a university academic, that of research. This discovery highlighted that we did not know as much as maybe we ought to about a different section of the academic community, about the experience of becoming university academics, and/or support needs from other perspectives. This gap in knowledge opened the opportunity to create and design this inquiry. An inquiry to study a group of academic peers, to view this experience through the lens of transition and the evolving experience. The question faced was how best to do this?

The answer and decisions taken here involved making choices: selecting the most appropriate methodology and methods to use to design a study of this nature, and to report back on the research question. It was evident from the reviewed research literature, and acknowledged here, that a blueprint for direct application did not exist. I faced creating the research design that was applied. Not having a blueprint was not problematic for this study. Instead, as I viewed it, the lack of an existing blueprint gave the opportunity to design one that fitted this inquiry. A research framework specifically focused on the research question and the experience of transition. Also provided was the chance to engage with reflective practice throughout in relation to my research position, personal experiences, and during the research process. Particularly, the way my positionality, experience, and knowledge as a current academic and ex-professional practitioner influenced and added value to this research study.

Reflection affirmed that I had not begun the design or entered the research space purely as an observer. I entered this inquiry as a researcher who, like the participants, had made

the transition from professional practice and become a university academic. A role I hold today and a journey that began over seventeen years ago. Unlike the participants here, people who I view as my academic peers, I began this study aware I was in an unusual position. That of being a practising university academic, an academic developer, the researcher who created this inquiry, and a mature doctoral student. I came to design this study knowing my academic identity and conscious of my research positionality through practice and experience.

Transparency was a value I held as important both as an academic and personally. This has meant being upfront and clear about my practice and experience as the researcher conducting this inquiry. From the start, I have acknowledged I am sympathetic towards, and held a preference for, qualitative research. I tended to lean more towards interpretivism (interpretivist) than constructivism (constructivist) thinking. I did not believe it was entirely possible for me to wipe the real-world or prior knowledge about the experience of transition from my research practice and thinking. Therefore, during the design of this study there are times when a tint of pragmatism emerged and, when appropriate, this thinking was considered and included.

A revisitation of the research literature led me to recognise that my overall research stance lent more towards the middle-ground than any extreme of research thinking and ideas as discussions in this chapter highlight. A further consideration of the research design process, as Savin-Baden and Major (2013:37) noted, led me to ask, 'what do I want to know?' and 'what is the best way?' to find this. At that point, I returned to consider research in the field of academic development. The field and discipline that I have belonged to for over nine years as well as the qualitative research community that I was already part of. This confirmed, as Boud (1999:7) stated, that 'academics will always become encultured into the institution, discipline and department' they are part of, which through my own transition experience, resonated with me. Since making the move from professional practice to university academic I was aware that I had taken on 'the ways' of higher education and academic life. This was not problematic here but viewed as beneficial to this inquiry with the potential to enrich understanding.

Most work done by Academic Developers was known to form from their practice, observations and 'located primarily in sites of academic practice' (Boud 1999:1), and I was no different. The site of higher education and cross-disciplinary practice was my workplace, and a community I was familiar and comfortable with engaging in. I recognised that most of my day-to-day work related to development through activities and research based on learning to enhance practice. I, and as Sutherland and Grant (2016:201) stated, considered it important to connect with research designs known to the academic development field and community. This study has included a review of research literature in that field. I did not start this research design automatically assuming because of my experience I knew what the 'best way' forward would be. Instead, I viewed every research inquiry as different. Here the focus was placed on understanding the experience of transition from the perspectives of professional practitioners.

I acknowledged, from personal experience as well as from the reviewed academic development literature, that academic development had shifted over the years. Research practice was opened to include 'communities of academics' (Sutherland 2016:191) particularly under-researched communities which fitted with the purposes of this inquiry. Sutherland (2016:194) pointed out, and as I was aware, Academic Developers are known to draw on a range of theoretical perspectives and methodologies when framing research inquiries, as I have here. Perspectives, thinking, and ideas such as: reflective practice, deep and surface approaches, action research, phenomenology, and 'in more recent years' (Sutherland 2016:194) research approaches broadened and diversified to include other types of research.

Like the qualitative research literature showed, and as I found, there was 'no standard, off-the-peg approach' (Wisdom 2002:224; Sutherland 2016:194) used. This was not problematic and instead provided confirmation of fit with the characteristics of qualitative research, the research approach. I knew a qualitative framework was 'illuminating, in that it opens up many ways of viewing the world and the people with whom we work' (Sutherland 2016:194). Additionally, I was conscious that all research

and research designs were limited, or enriched, by the researcher and participants involved. I remained cognisant of this throughout the study and key points are addressed in the discussion here where limitations, enrichment, and influence was found relevant to this inquiry.

The review of research literature highlighted, as Crotty (1998:1) observed, and as I found, an 'array of methodologies and methods [were] laid out before [my] gaze'. However, 'methodologies and methods [were] not usually laid out in a highly organised fashion and [appeared] more as a maze than as pathways to orderly research' (Crotty 1998:1). The other issue related to terminology presented and used in the research literature. This was 'far from consistent' (Crotty 1998:1) and a cause of confusion especially when some similar terms were used interchangeably by scholars and researchers. A consideration of key terms, specifically methodology and methods, reminded of the complexity of qualitative research. But this brought the need for a clear identification of the difference between these two terms when framing this study. Straightforward definitions were identified and used here to create the research framework in two parts.

Here methodology was 'about the framework' (Cousin 2009:6), the overarching framework that has shaped this inquiry and thinking about the phenomenon. The methodology has provided the philosophical framework used to think and make choices about the design and pathway. In other words, seen here as the overarching research strategy and plan where consideration was given to relevant theory, world views (paradigms), and assumptions as part of this research design process. Methods, on the other hand, are understood here as 'the tools and procedures' (Cousin 2009:6) that underpinned the study. Research tools and procedures that consisted of theoretical methods and research approaches which fit inside the methodology and are aligned to thinking. Fitting tools and procedures specifically chosen for use here to operationalise, interpret, and complete the research process.

As such, the Research Design and Strategy emerged as each level of the research process was considered in turn and decisions made regarding the pathway to follow. This shaped

and structured the key components discussed, and followed, in this chapter as illustrated in the route map below, Fig. 12:

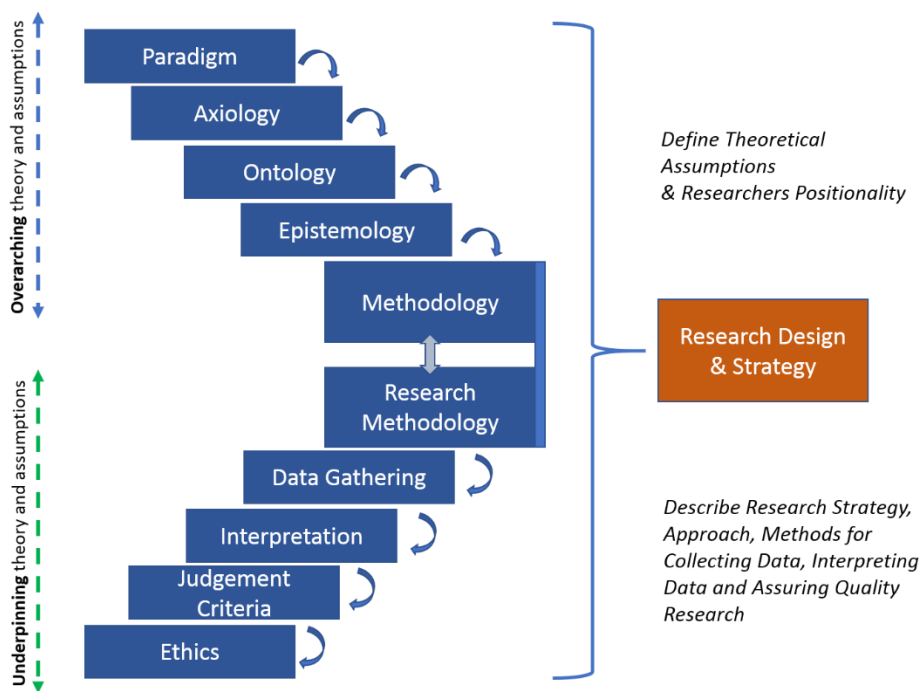


Figure 12. Research Framework, Process and Methodological Approach (Route Map)

The research strategy and design comprised of overarching and underpinning theories and assumptions. This research framework was informed by the works of Crotty (1998:5); Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:8-9); and Silverman (2005:100); Creswell (1998); and Creswell and Cresswell (2018). A combination of ideas and thinking drawn together to produce this research design and strategy. The one used to study the phenomenon. Discussion in this chapter has drawn on different models and lenses used for thinking about this inquiry, for conducting research, and for reporting on this thesis. The application of this ‘blueprint’ used here to conduct this inquiry has returned understanding, and insight, about the transitional experience from a different perspective, university academics from practice. The remainder of this Methodology chapter used elements of this framework to present the research design in two key parts as follows:

Part I dealt with the Overarching Theory and Assumptions: Research Paradigm. A component discussed next as the Interpretative Framework: Qualitative Paradigm (3.2) and has included:

- 3.2.1 Qualitative Paradigm: Nature of Beliefs (Worldview)
- 3.2.2 Ontology: Nature of Reality
- 3.2.3 Epistemology: Nature of Knowledge and Relationships
- 3.2.4 Narrative Methodology: Practice of Discovering Knowledge
- 3.2.5 Methodological Framework and Research Strategy
- 3.2.6 Narrative: Studying Experience and Hearing Stories

Part II dealt with the Underpinning Theory and Assumptions: Research Tools and Procedures (3.3). This has included:

- 3.3.1 Sample: Selection, Recruitment and Access
- 3.3.2 Gathering Data: Collecting Experiences

This section also deals with the Interpretation Methods: Questions to Understanding (3.4):

- 3.4.1 Analytical Strategy: Nature of Interpretation
- 3.4.2 Initial Cycle: Transcription
- 3.4.3 First-cycle Analysis: Initial Steps and Coding
- 3.4.4 Second-cycle Analysis: Turning and Theming
- 3.4.5 Conceptual-Level: Theory, Patterns and Argument
- 3.4.6 Criticism of Analytical Processes and Models

Assuring the quality of this research (3.5) and Ethics Approval and Clearance are discussed prior to the concluding the chapter (3.6).

This study was designed to ensure congruence at each phase or level of the research process. Axiology, viewed here as an integral part of design and research practice, was considered throughout and as such this thinking and discussion is integrated into the discussion rather than being separated. The term related to ethical behaviour and to the

nature of values. Here, understood and defined as 'what the researcher believes is valuable and ethical' (Killam 2013:3). In other words, the guiding principles, and values I applied throughout to inform and make decisions about this inquiry. From the outset, my stance was one of taking a balanced view when creating, designing, and conducting research inquiries. For me it was important to think, and to design this study, having included the views of others. The aim here was to provide a balance between the views of others and my own experiences, values, ethical, and moral stances throughout this inquiry. I did this by setting out my positionality at each stage and as part of the discussion as this chapter, and the thesis, unfolded.

The remainder of this chapter continued to present and discuss the conceptual framework through each of the different research levels within the research process. Each research level was considered in turn and the research direction, and strategy, emerged and was formed from that review. It was on the considerations discussed here that the entire research design and strategy rested. This last chapter completed the conceptual framework and theoretical framing for this inquiry.

3.2 Interpretative Framework: Qualitative Paradigm

As mentioned, I recognised my preference for qualitative research and the tenants of this approach. I identified myself as a qualitative researcher and one, who during the time I had transitioned to and evolved in higher education, had travelled through different disciplinary fields of research: business and society; education; and now academic development. This was not a concern here because social researchers were known to 'work in a number of disciplines ... and professional fields' (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013:3) of which the fields of education, academic development and business were part.

At an exalted level qualitative research might appear to be the same across each of these fields but I was aware there was a difference related to thinking and practices. A disciplinary difference, to the ways in which research was thought about, considered, and the claims it can make related to the research field. Here, my focus was associated with academic development, placed on the research question, and sought to understand the experience of transition not to measure it, or to test it, but to gain insight and

understanding. The type of framework needed to be 'right' for this research inquiry, fit for the purpose of gaining and delivering understanding, which this study achieved.

From reflection and by keeping closely focused on the research question involved a consideration of the research literature related to qualitative research, perspectives, and my positionality was undertaken. Whilst I accepted that 'there is no one commonly agreed upon definition of qualitative research' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:11) and that qualitative research was in itself 'a field of inquiry in its own right' (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:2) cutting across disciplines for the purpose of clarity it was necessary to define for this study.

A consideration of the research literature confirmed that qualitative studies opened researchers to 'variety and choice' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:11), a position known to have evolved from a long and complex history. Generally, qualitative research can be taken to mean different things at different times but as Denzin and Lincoln (2005:3) highlighted, and as I recognised, this type of research was viewed to be:

'a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations ... [meaning] researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them'.

Not all researchers and scholars may agree, preferring quantitative approaches over qualitative research and alternative views were not considered problematic here. My decision to select a qualitative paradigm was not based on whether I needed to use numbers or words or a combination. The focus was on gaining understanding about the phenomenon, the experience of transition and the evolving transitional experience from the perspectives of professional practitioners. I followed on the belief that 'the best approach to research always depends on the question you are trying to answer' (Killam 2013:8) and the design of this study remained closely fastened to this thinking.

I wanted to, and did, create an overarching framework that was respectful of different cultures, situations, and that could return understanding. My stance here was not to engage, or risk distraction, when framing this inquiry by being entangled in ‘otherizing’ (Cousin 2009:3) different types of researchers, their thinking, or their approaches. Focus was firmly placed on selecting the most appropriate framework and design to answer the research question posed earlier in Chapter 1. I steered away from over involvement related to various ‘paradigm wars’ (Robson 2002:43; Cousin 2009:3) known to exist, as was evident from the reviewed research literature, and from personal experience as an Academic Developer. Instead, I preferred to follow the advice offered by Cousin (2009:3) and her reference to Bentz and Shapiro (1998), to avoid:

‘deference to particular paradigms and do not get overly involved in paradigm wars ... whatever framework we choose, the overarching one has to be that of respect for different cultures of inquiry ... unless there are some very clear reasons to withhold that respect’

Respect, where justified, was an important value to me. Upfront I recognised the benefit offered by different types of thinking and research to the body of knowledge about a topic gained from different perspectives. But quite often across the research literature qualitative research appeared to be set against quantitative research as if they were ‘polar opposites’ (Cresswell 1998:15) which was not how I viewed it from personal experience or through my academic practice. I acknowledged, when thinking about a research framework that it was not as clear-cut as to express that one was either a qualitative researcher or a quantitative researcher. As mentioned, I leant towards qualitative research but not at the complete exclusion of quantitative research because this approach, as I saw it, held a place in the research world as much as qualitative inquiries do.

Reflection reminded that in my own academic practice, within the institution, and world I occupied measurement and narrative featured frequently. I appreciated ‘the ability to measure and count [as] a precious human achievement and it behoves us not to be dismissive of it’ (Cresswell 1998:15). As Cresswell (1998:15) noted ‘measuring and

counting turn out to be essential to our purposes' as researchers. I accepted that 'whatever research we engage in, it [was] possible for either qualitative methods, or both, to serve our purposes' (Cresswell 1998:15) as researchers as we endeavoured to advance knowledge. I was conscious that different frameworks, and views about research, led inquirers to make different claims as decisions on the most appropriate worldviews, theories, and methods were made. This was not problematic or a concern here, because it was clear that a qualitative design was emergent.

Although the research literature reviewed had shown that differences in research thinking and traditions existed, central unifiers were highlighted. Connectors across research and people. Particularly, unifiers that connected research communities and researchers around a central hope. The hope of justifying what was chosen and ending up having produced research 'outcomes that merit respect' (Crotty 1998:13). Research studies that 'others', observers and readers, recognised as 'sound research' (Crotty 1998:13). A hope I held.

By keeping closely focused on the research question and having undertaken a review of the research literature related to an inquiry of this nature, led me to recognise and confirm, that an interpretative framework was the most appropriate line for this study to follow and be framed on. The application of a qualitative paradigm enabled understanding and insight about the experience of transition to be brought about through a relevant research design, as presented in this chapter. Here, qualitative research, was taken to be 'social research aimed at investigating the way in which people made sense of their ideas and experiences' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:11), and here the design engaged 'an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem' (Cresswell 1998:15).

The overarching interpretative framework used here was confirmed as the most fitting and appropriate to apply to shape the framing of the research design and strategy. Connected issues related to paradigm, ontology, and epistemology, were identified prior to finally locating a suitable research methodology to gain understanding about the

experience of transition to become a university academic from practice and ultimately to answer the research question. Here qualitative research made understanding the nature of this phenomenon possible to achieve.

The remainder of the chapter was structured to take the reader through the systematic process used for thinking about this research inquiry, for making decisions, and my position in relation to the various theoretical assumptions and issues that influenced the creation, design, and conduct of this inquiry are set out.

3.2.1 Paradigm: Nature of Beliefs (Worldviews)

The pursuit to understand a group of individuals who became university academics from professional practice led to a consideration of the position I inhabited in this study. Particularly, my 'worldview[s]' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:38) and related beliefs. As mentioned, I designed this research study to gain understanding about the event from an alternative perspective rather than one focused on cultures, structures, or actions. I accepted other qualitative researchers might hold different preferences or worldviews. I tended to believe 'the social world [was] distinct from the natural one and, as such, researchers should learn about it by exploring that world, rather than by way of cause-and-effect tests that seek to examine an objective reality' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:54). A position fitting for the purpose of this study and qualitative research.

Like others in the qualitative field, I 'value[d] the human experience' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:54) and placed value on the 'holistic' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:54). Here I was interested in seeking the perceptions of social actors, specifically the university academics who moved from practice to become part of academic life and work. I accepted there were different ways of looking at social reality and the social world, and agreed with Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:7) that 'we can perhaps most profitably approach these conceptions of the social world by examining the explicit and implicit assumptions underpinning them'.

As such, consideration was given to the nature of beliefs and the associated worldviews. However, from the research literature reviewed it was evident that the terms worldview and paradigm were used interchangeably at times. The literature defined paradigm as 'a

loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient[ed] thinking and research' (Bogdan and Biklen 2003:22). A 'basic set of beliefs that guide[d] action' (Guba 1990:17), 'a general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher brings to a study' (Cresswell and Cresswell 2018:5), and a 'patchwork of ideas of earlier thinkers being borrowed by later thinkers' (Inglis and Thorpe 2019:3). Although a research paradigm, as I saw it, consisted of a 'loose set of ideas' (Inglis and Thorpe, 2019:3) I found these 'often [had] a lot more in common with other paradigms than it may first seem' (Inglis and Thorpe 2019:3). Here, paradigm is understood as a worldview, a framework of beliefs, values, methods, and the place within which a research inquiry takes place. The place that provided the theoretical orientation and perspectives which informed the framing of the phenomenon studied here.

Being a researcher meant thinking about research and involved reflecting, and deciding, on the overarching paradigms drawn and used to frame this inquiry. A framework that enabled claims to be made about what this inquiry could deliver and its limitations acknowledged. A combination of factors led me to developing my research thinking and to 'embracing a strong qualitative approach' (Cresswell and Cresswell 2018:6), along with an orientation towards 'real-world practice' (Cresswell and Cresswell 2018:7). This mix shaped this study and my worldviews. The research paradigm, or interpretive framework as viewed here, was chosen to provide a 'way of looking at the world, the assumptions people have about what is important and what makes the world work' (Bogdan and Biklen 2003:22). Here 'paradigm is a worldview' (Healy and Perry 2000:4) that has "a set of linked assumptions about the world which is shared by a community of scientists investigating the world" (Deshpande 1983:101). A set of models used to think about the world framed in a particular way and applied to a research context, as occurred here. As such, an interpretivists lens was used here to design and view this research. I assumed 'individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work' (Cresswell and Cresswell 2018:9) and this belief overarched this research and shaped the line of inquiry taken at each research level. This study intended to 'make sense of (or interpret) the meaning others have about the world' (Cresswell and Cresswell 2018:6), which was achieved.

From my research practice and the research literature reviewed, paradigms could be thought of, and presented, as 'positivism, critical theory, constructivism and realism' (Healy and Perry 2000:4). Here paradigms were understood as 'spanning ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Healy and Perry 2000:10). The reviewed literature showed positivism predominated the world of research, scientific thinking, and was 'embraced by many scientists' (Robson 2002:19). Positivists 'look[ed] for the existence of a constant relationship between ... two variables' (Robson 2002:21) and this might apply to another study. Here 'people are the focus' (Robson 2002:21) and a positivist approach was not deemed relevant as this research took 'place in a social real world context' (Robson 2002:21), academic life. As Healy and Perry (2000:6), explained positivism was 'inappropriate when approaching a social science phenomenon ... which involves humans and their real-life experiences' (Robson 1993: 60). Also, positivists "separate[d] themselves from the world they studied, while researchers within the three other paradigms [critical theory, constructivism, and realism] acknowledged they had to participate in real-world life to some extent so as to better understand and express its emergent properties and features' (Healy and Perry 2000:6). This inquiry was not based in the natural sciences but within the social sciences.

Instead of beginning with theory, as some researchers might, I set out to gain understanding and insights from my academic peers who had direct knowledge of the transition experience. I acknowledged that other dominant research paradigms existed which effect the act and design of research by guiding the direction. However, for me, the paradigm choice to study the phenomenon here involved a qualitative research model and engagement with that field of research rather than a quantitative approach. On reflection, I recognised I leant towards realism in contrast to positivism. The realism paradigm was considered, and shown to be, 'relevant to much qualitative research' (Healy and Perry 2000:6) and is discussed further in the next section of this chapter during ontological considerations.

During the creation of this study, I recognised I followed on behind an interpretative community, qualitative researchers, borrowing from them social theories that when I

connected them ensured a fitting research design for this inquiry. I did not just want to take without giving 'something' back but acknowledged it was difficult to precisely identify this return upfront during the design stage. Additionally, I was aware that 'different thinkers and schools of thought often borrow, take up or criticize the same sorts of ideas and themes' (Inglis and Thorpe 2019:3). My hope at the end of this study was that the findings were useful and that others might take the understanding gained further 'transform[ing] for new purposes' as Inglis and Thorpe (2019:3) suggested. I hoped to help us understand more about the experience of transition, and this research made that possible. I recognised that engagement in the process of research involved not only gaining understanding but learning. Like other researchers my belief was that 'we must use ourselves as a key to our understanding of others and conversely, our understanding of others as a way of finding out about ourselves' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007:19). This principle was applied here to build understanding and learning from the findings of this research.

Having considered the nature of beliefs and established that this inquiry was formed within an interpretative framework, a qualitative paradigm, the overarching research philosophy was identified. This philosophy has guided and been used to shape the next levels of the research process which informed the design of the research framework.

3.2.2 Ontology: Nature of Reality

Ontology through the research literature was shown as a component of the social world, part of the research process. The place where the researcher's position and perspective have natural implications when framing a research inquiry. A consideration of ontology led me to acknowledge this paradigm as a way researchers thought about 'the nature of reality and existence' (Thompson and Walker 2010:129). Ontology is concerned about the effect this thinking has on 'on what is knowable' (Cousin 2009:6) in the world. However, there 'are a range of views about what exists' (Knight 2002:23), as evident from the review.

Here I viewed the 'nature of reality and the nature of the human being in the world' (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:183) as part of an interpretivist framework drawing from the

model related to themes of reality and knowledge that Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011:102) and Healy and Perry (2000:4) provided. This study did not set out to 'create change, to the benefit of those oppressed by power' (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba 2011:102) as might be the case if I had created an inquiry along the lines of Critical Theory, Feminism, or Race Theory. Nor does the framing here begin from a belief of 'transformation based on democratic participation between the researcher and the subject' (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba 2011:102) as a Participatory or Postmodern Theory might do.

Instead, focus was on 'gain[ing] understanding by locating subject perceptions' (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba 2011:102). This directed the line of inquiry towards the ontology of realism. My ontological position arose from the belief that the scientific world "is largely autonomous, though created by us" (Healy and Perry 2000:8) and that the 'nature of reality' (Killam 2013:3), or realities in this world, was considered to 'consist of the independent creations of minds or living creatures' (Healy and Perry, 2000:11), the world of academic life, institutions, and professional practitioners. Like (Healy and Perry 2000:17), I assumed that research dealt with 'complex social phenomena involving reflective people' which contrasted with the views of positivism which 'operates in the objective world' (Healy and Perry 2000:11). As I saw it, and noted by (Healy and Perry 2000:12), 'the social world of realism [was] not a laboratory' in this social world 'actors make choices', the choice in life to move to teach in higher education, and to become a university academic. I had assumed that none were forced to do this.

Here I believed, reality in relation to the experience of transition, could best be understood through the perspectives of practitioners and that this can benefit from being interpreted by this group. An alternative paradigm, that of Participatory Theory, held views that 'knowers can only be knowers when known by others' (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba 2011:102; Heron and Reason 1997:280). Thinking that resonated in relation to the pursuit of understanding practitioner experiences of transition.

The reviewed research literature related to ontology showed two perspectives contrasted: realism and relativism. Relativism was known to be opposing of the

ontological paradigm of reality, realism. Relativism, as a way of framing and thinking about research tried 'to understand another person or culture' (Seale 1999:24). I wanted to gain understanding about the experience of transition from the perspectives of practitioners, so this stance was not applicable to this inquiry as I saw it. Realism, on the other hand, although known to share 'some philosophical aspects with positivism' (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2003:85) was considered appropriate and pure positivism discarded as I did not view reality as existing 'independent of human thoughts and beliefs' (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2003:84). Here realism was understood to consist of, 'abstract things that are born of people's minds but exist independently of any one person' (Healy and Perry 2000:8) distinguishing this from the extremes of an objective or subjective worldview.

Understanding the experience of transition through the perspectives of university academics from practice meant the thoughts and beliefs of these social actors formed a fundamental part of this inquiry. Here the study was dependent on stories practitioners had to share as part of the research process. Participants were considered as more than subjects of an inquiry. I viewed my academic peers as professionals and integral to the study. I sought to ensure this inquiry produced 'knowledge that [was] reflective of their reality' (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba 2011:103). I was guided by Knight (2002:23) who provided a useful description of the realist position through the works of Searle (2000:10) which identified background assumptions existed by default:

- There is a real world existing independent of us
- [Researchers] have direct perceptual access to it
- Words have reasonably clear meanings and can refer to real objects in the world
- True statements correspond to how things are, to the facts of the world
- Causes really do produce effects

As mentioned, I entered the research space with an 'open mind' (Seale 1999:24). I found I agreed with most realist assumptions and recognised a study of the experience of transition had the potential to identify the causes that produced effects, what those effects were, and the impact during a transition within academic life. I accepted multiple perceptions may exist and dealt with these during the process of interpretation.

Every experience, as I viewed it, could be taken as a moving force, not something static, but 'transformed through the human context they enter', as Clandinin and Rosiek (2007:39) pointed out through reference to Dewey's work (1981:251). Here this related to the move from professional practice to become a university academic and involved entering academic life and being transformed through this journey. This inquiry had the potential to, and intended to, advance understanding. The consideration of Dewey's work drew my attention to the temporality of knowledge generation. Here I accepted that experience(s) would always be 'more than we can know and represent in a single statement, paragraph or book' (Clandinin and Roseik 2007:39). A limitation accepted as part of this study.

Accepted was the thinking that continuity of experiences 'grow out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences' (Clandinin and Connelly 2000:2). This resonated with the concept of 'transition cycles' (Williams 1999) as discussed in Chapter 2. However, I recognised that it was not possible to accurately predict what experiences would grow from what or where these might eventually lead practitioners to within academic life or in their academic careers. My preference was for this to emerge from the stories if found shared or to exist as part of understanding the experience of transition.

Ontology was further considered through a principle provided by Kim (2016:71), that of *aesthetic* found in a present experience. This idea viewed 'experience as appreciative, perceiving, and enjoying, from the [practitioners] rather than the producer's standpoint' (Kim 2016:71). This was of interest because it provided another mode of gaining knowledge, one that could be 'merged with non-intellectual elements' (Kim 2016:71). Research inquiries could 'gain empathic and imaginative understandings, knowledge, and

perceptions of the world through a story' especially for relatively untravelled worlds. For most professional practitioners the world of academic life was likely to be untravelled. The perspectives gained from findings here have provided the opportunity to give others, who have not undergone such an experience for themselves, a glimpse (Kim 2016:72) of what the journey involved and meant. A chance to enlarge the meaning of experience (Kim 2016:72) and 'to link together with other experiences that are similar but not the same' (Kim 2016:72) - to deepen and broaden our understanding of transition.

In a way, practitioners 'come to inhabit [a] pre-existing system and to be inhabited by it' (Crotty, 1998:53) and 'realism research discovers knowledge of the real world' (Healy and Perry, 2000:12). I accepted that 'social phenomena by their nature are fragile ... not fixed but are contingent upon their environment'. This study proceeded based on the ontological view and position of realism flowing, and framed from within, a qualitative paradigm.

3.2.3 Epistemology: Nature of Knowledge and Relationships

The consideration of the nature of reality (ontology), 'how we might know about it' (Knight, 2002:23) was examined next. Particularly, the nature of knowledge and understanding. Here knowledge was viewed as 'a creation of minds at work ... best described as 'understanding'' (Knight 2002:23), and considered closely connected with ontology. These two philosophical standpoints are not lightly linked but, as Inglis and Thorpe (2019:5) highlighted, epistemology as a worldview was 'intimately connected to its ontology, the one leading to the other and visa versa'. Although not all researchers viewed paradigms in the same way, as evident from the reviewed research literature and through experience in my academic practice, making my position clear was required during the development of this research framework. This lens was use later to think about the phenomenon, it was where thinking flowed from, and has shaped the study of the phenomenon here. Epistemology here was accepted as a theoretical perspective, one that formed part of the research framework and design. I considered, and reflected upon, 'views of knowledge as well as [my] views of how knowledge may be uncovered' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:59) in this section.

I, like Savin-Baden and Major (2013:54), believed for qualitative researchers “being able to identify a theory of knowledge, a set of guidelines by which they may decide whether and how they may know a social phenomenon, and a set of principles about how they will demonstrate that knowledge, [was] an indispensable part of qualitative research’. Research literature showed epistemology as the ‘theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology’ (Crotty 1998:3). Comprised not just of theories of knowing but included ‘the relationship between the research and the researched, and serves to guide to developing of the phenomenon under study” (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:58).

Here epistemology was defined as ‘the nature of knowledge’ (Crotty 1998; Mason 2006; Cousin 2009) and accepted as ‘the basis of knowledge – its nature and forms, how it can be acquired and communicated to other human beings’ (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007:7). I acknowledged that the epistemological standpoint adopted when framing this inquiry would be used later to gather data and applied to develop understanding (knowledge) of the phenomenon, which resulted. As with ontology, “the claims researchers can most readily sustain are related to the epistemologies and ontologies on which their inquiries are based’ (Knight, 2002:23) and those assumed claims form part of this discussion.

A consideration of realism in relation to epistemology led to the view here that it was ‘neither value-laden nor value-free, rather, realism researchers are value-aware. That is, realists accept that there is a real world to discover even if it is only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehensible ... a participant’s perception is not reality as constructivism and critical theory would suggest. Rather, a participant’s perception for realism is a window to reality through which a picture of reality can be triangulated with other perceptions ... [it] relies on multiple perceptions about a single reality’ (Healy and Perry 2000:4). Put in context, I was value-aware and accepted that there was a world to discover in relation to academic life and the transition to this by university academics from practice. Gaining knowledge here meant being able to understand, and see, the

picture of transition through the perceptions of practitioners, the social actors in this inquiry, which has occurred.

Further consideration related to the theory about knowledge and the ways in which perceptions about the experience of transition could be collected, and from what sources, led to a continued review of literature, reflection, and interrogation of my academic practice. From this it was evident that knowledge was viewed as either empirical or intuitive. Empirical knowledge seen as obtainable 'through direct experience or real-world perception, without going through abstractions or imaginations' (Deen 2021) and served to understand the transitional experience. Intuitive knowledge related to knowledge that people have within them and assumed this did not need a formal process of reasoning to be found or generated. As I saw it, understanding the experience of transition required access to the real-world and to the direct experiences through people, their perceptions. Although I am aware that intuitive knowledge existed, and had a place, here it was discarded as the stories gained needed interpretation. I do not claim that the knowledge gained in this study would be generalisable, in that it could be applied to all transition experiences where a move to academic life was involved. Instead, I acknowledged that ensuring validity was an important part of the methods adopted by this framework.

Consistency was important too and given I established an ontological position earlier akin to most qualitative researchers, and an ontological standpoint based on a social realist position, then my epistemological stance followed. Here knowledge was understood to consist of 'the body of 'truths' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:58). In other words, 'information or awareness that humans have acquired or constructed' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:58) over time through the process of research accepting different views are held. Unlike some anti-realist viewpoints, I did not believe that Truth, as Knight (2000:23) noted, was an 'illusion' or 'illusive'. I believed Truth and understanding about a phenomenon could be acquired, interpreted, and understood through knowledge bearers. People who had first-hand experiences and the social actors who had direct

access to the knowledge sought. Specifically, the story about the experience of transition to become a university academic from practice.

From the reviewed qualitative research literature, and as Yin (2016:15) pointed out through the works of Phillips (1990b:35), “all types of inquiry, in so far as the goal is to reach credible conclusions, [have] an underlying epistemological similarity”. This guidance assisted decision-making during the design of an emergent research approach. I accepted that researchers ‘should not associate the choice of an epistemological location with being saddled with a rigid or overly doctrinaire option’ (Yin 2016:15). I did not feel ‘saddled’ instead I believed it was important to make sure the line of inquiry was consistent with the ontological position and the claims made, those not possible to make, and clarified as part of the research process.

As mentioned, I was drawn to pragmatism thinking and here although I adopted a social realist position about knowledge, I acknowledged a tendency to ‘take a practical view when attempting to problem solve and to link theory and practice through the research process’ as Savin-Baden and Major (2013:39) highlighted through the work of Rorty (1979). Although this inquiry was designed and conducted primarily in the spirit of an interpretivist ontology and realist epistemology it was possible, and appropriate, that a degree of pragmatism was compatible especially when needed, value was added, and practical to include during interpretation and re-conceptualisation stages to bring about understanding of experiences. Other researchers had similar views of compatibility, Maxwell (2011:13) posited ontological realism was compatible with epistemological constructivism in research practice. I accepted that a tint of pragmatism was applicable to this study, which it was.

A consideration of Truth involved reflection on my own thinking and the research literature reviewed related to truths and theory. I was conscious that qualitative researchers needed to articulate, define, and validate claims related to Truth, as addressed here. This study derived knowledge about the experience of transition directly from participants and as such this was considered valid knowledge, true from the perspective of this community, and that of qualitative research. I recognised that validity

and trustworthiness needed to be assured and deal with these later during the selection of methods.

I did not entirely subscribe to the belief and assumptions that 'one truth' existed waiting to be discovered. I believed knowledge (understanding) could be gained through people's perceptions and direct experience of the real world which they inhabited and experienced as discussed earlier. Given that we live in changing times, especially within the world of higher education and academic life, this study was not static. Here it was not assumed that the understanding generated was completely generalisable to other experiences of transition. Instead, my stance in relation to Truth was that it did not sit outside of the people involved. I acknowledged that a larger world and different worlds outside of this story did. The 'knowable world' here was not considered 'separable from the researcher' (Cousin 2009:7). I was part of this study. The instrument through which understanding the experience of transition was collected, interpreted, and knowledge gained.

The purpose here was to 'capture the meaning of real-world events from the perspective of a study's participants' (Yin 2016:16), and although like the participants I had made a similar move to become a university academic, I acknowledged my personal experience of transition was individual. My journey may have similarities, but it was different because all human beings are different and unique. I accepted that other university academics from practice may have different experiences and stories of transition to tell. The research literature showed it was usual for most qualitative researchers to step into the real world of the participants however here that was different. I was already in the world of academic life employed as a university academic, and from the world of professional practice albeit a different discipline to some participants. I recognised that to apply the theories selected, and to conduct this research study, I needed to be part of the inquiry. As Yin (2016:41) highlighted through reference to Spradley (1979:7), the 'researcher unavoidably serves as a research instrument because relevant real-world phenomena ... cannot be measured by external instruments but only can be revealed by ... talking to people', which was the situation here.

The review of research literature raised different questions about relationships specifically between those of the researcher and participants. In essence, 'does the researcher believe that the relationship with the participants should be objective or subjective?' (Killam 2013:5). In other words, the way in which human beings in a study are viewed. My stance was not at either end of these spectrums. My view was that 'realism permits a new integration of what are usually referred to as subjectivist and objectivist approaches to social theory' (Robson 2002:35). This new integration argued 'that social structure is at the same time the relatively enduring product, and also the medium, of motivated human action. This allows both subjectivist and objectivist approaches to co-exist' (Robson 2002:35), a position I considered appropriate and fitting here.

Connected were emic and etic considerations even though these might be considered as 'out-dated' (Yin 2016:16) for some inquiries. This thinking did not prevent me from reflecting on my position. Having acknowledged already I was not on the outside of the 'institutions being studied' (Yin 2016:17), I was part of higher education and academic life. Here an emic perspective was considered relevant to answer the research question because I sought to 'capture participants indigenous meanings of real-world events' (Yin 2016:16-17). Focus was placed on 'the views of the people and their perceptions, meanings and interpretations' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:12) as well as 'understanding people and their circumstances' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:12) in this study. My position when framing and in design was clear, I wanted to understand people and the phenomena 'rather than to analyze relationships between variables or test cause-and effect relationships' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:12), which resulted.

From reflection and reviewed literature related to relationships and validity of understanding, I recognised I was sympathetic towards the idea that 'our representations arise from experience and must return to that experience for their validation' (Clandinin and Rosiek 2007:39). Keeping connected to this group of academics during validation was considered a key component here and linked to research methods adopted later.

Having examined research literature, reflected, interrogated my practice, and reconsidered my beliefs about 'the ways of knowing what you know and how our research is intended to arrive at its findings and conclusions' (Yin 2016:41), followed in the spirit of realism. I acknowledged that subjectivist and objectivist approaches could co-exist. Believed that the researcher and researched were integral to the inquiry and multiple perceptions about the experience of transition were valid. Truth could be validated as part of the framing and design. Epistemology was taken as 'the relationship between that reality and the researcher' (Healy and Perry 2000:6). Next a consideration of the most appropriate Methodology to use to collect, gather, and interpret the experience of transition was examined.

3.2.4 Methodology: Practice of Discovering Knowledge

The choice of an appropriate methodology was understood to be connected to, and driven by, the 'ontological and epistemological beliefs' (Killam 2013:6). Those set out in the earlier sections. Here methodology was considered and shown through the research literature as 'the best means for acquiring knowledge about the world' (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:183). Specifically, the best means for gaining knowledge about the experience of transition from university lecturers in this study who moved from professional practice into academic life.

Here Methodology was viewed as the overarching 'theory of how research should be undertaken' (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2003:2) in line with a qualitative paradigm. This led to a consideration of a 'methodological procedure' (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:24), that of Narrative, because I was aware I already 'frequented places where the events he or she is interested in naturally occur' (Bogdan and Biklen 2003:3): academic life and higher education. Here this site was viewed to be the 'real world' or 'the field' using Robson's (2002:4) terms. I acknowledged that higher education institutions would be the place where this insider research was conducted and where university academics could be located.

The methodological procedures, as well as the research question, drove the line of inquiry towards the selection of a research design capable of gaining understanding from

participants. Understanding about the transition experience from stories individuals told and shared. I believed it was necessary to 'hear them talk' (Bogdan and Biklen 2003:31) about the experience and this generated the narratives used and interpreted in this inquiry. Also, I believed it was important to hear these university academics talk about the experience because these people were not seen here as observers on the outside of the research process. They were integral to this study as social actors, knowledge-bearers, and held first-hand experience. Here their stories have helped make understanding more possible.

The consideration of procedures used to generate narratives of identified philosophical approaches connected to narrative research. I recognised, from experience and the research literature, that a 'strategy, plan of action, [and] process or design' (Crotty 1998:3) was required to gather narratives. My prior experience of using narratives in previous research designs helped here along with the connection of a narrative methodology with appropriate research methods. Having weighed up different methodological procedures shown in the research literature, especially the ones applicable for use within an interpretative framework, it was evident that narratives formed through stories of experiences was the most appropriate research path to follow. To study the phenomenon here a narrative research approach was used. An approach known and applied to qualitative studies by various academics, researchers, and scholars (Kim 2016; Pinnegar and Daynes 2007; Clandinin and Rosiek 2007; Andrews 2007; Josselson 2007; Lyons 2007), and so on. One I considered fitting for this inquiry.

3.2.5 Methodological Framework and Research Strategy

I recognised, as Kim (2016:8) aptly captured "narrative is everywhere' and this was certainly the case in my own academic practice, field, and life. I acknowledged that because we, as human beings, and academics, 'understand our lives in terms of the narratives that we live out and share, [then] narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others' (Kim 2016:8), the professional practitioners in this study. The need to hear these new university academics talk about experiences in order to generate narratives led this section to discuss theory, assumptions, and concerns related to a

narrative methodology. Also, the research methods that underpin the design of this inquiry.

3.2.6 Narrative: Studying Experience and Hearing Stories

Here the term Narrative should not be confused with methods of Narrative Inquiry because, as evident in the research literature, this could complicate the two terms. In this study, Narrative research was a different methodology and approach. Narrative formed part of the philosophical framework and qualitative paradigm used to frame this research as interpretative. Specifically, it was 'about the framework' (Cousin 2009:6), the way in which the selection of theories and the development of research was designed to gain further understanding about the phenomenon. As I understood from experience, and as identified through the research literature reviewed, 'narrative approaches focus on collecting narratives, because the point of collecting stories is to understand the experience and the way they are told, seeking clarity about both the events that have unfolded and the meaning that participants have made of them (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:231).

I was aware this approach 'revolve[d] around an interest in life experiences as narrated by those who live them' (Chase 2011:421): the participants. As Andrews, *et al* (2013:2) put it, and as I recognised, 'narratives carry traces of human lives that we want to understand'. Transition and the evolving transition experience, was part of human life and a narrative methodology considered appropriate to help trace, understand and learn more. However, it was evident from the research literature that narrative as a term could be viewed as ambiguous and equivocal potentially opening it up to interpretation. On reflection, whilst my position was sympathetic towards different views of narrative, it was defined here as 'the process of making a [collective] story' (Polkinghorne 1988:13) and accepted that the focus was on 'the human experience presented in narratives and stories' (Kim 2016:69).

In other words, I took narrative research to be 'the way in which researchers conceive, capture, and convey the stories and experiences of individuals' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:231) to others. As such, narrative approaches were considered in the literature,

and here, to be 'theory, process, data and product combined to create a unique form of inquiry' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:231), which this study has done. Here the employment of this methodology provided an appropriate frame for this research and has potentially enabled the community of narrative researchers, of which I am one, to come together to 'make sense of the world full of stories' (Kim 2016:34) through research from different perspectives.

The adoption of a methodology 'underpinned by narrative theory in which it is suggested that humans make meaning through narrative' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:231) meant it was necessary to consider the way in which stories (narratives) could be gathered. Transition experiences existed to be discovered, interpreted, retold, and learned from opening the opportunity for this understanding to be gained through a mix of experiences. Human experiences, as I and other researchers viewed it, were interesting and a place where stories emerged from. I believed that telling and retelling stories was something inherently natural for humans to do as people shared their experiences with others. I followed behind Clandinin and Roseik (2007:35) with an appreciation that:

'Human beings have lived out and told stories about that living for as long as we could talk. And we have talked about the stories we tell for almost as long ... stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another's assistance in building lives and communities'.

Stories are an important part of human life and aid our understanding. It became evident from the research literature that the terms narrative and story were at times used interchangeably. Reflection led to a consideration of these terms and to the identification of the difference between them. As a result, narrative here was viewed as 'a recounting of events that are organized in temporal sequence, and this linear organization of events makes up a story' (Kim 2016:8). In the context of this inquiry this meant unfolding, and understanding, the event that led up to and through the evolving transition experience to become university academics from practice, the story. In essence, 'narratives constitute stories, and stories rely of narratives' (Kim 2016:9).

Story, on the other hand, was taken to be different and viewed here as ‘a detailed organization of narrative events arranged in a (story) structure based on time although the events are not necessarily in chronological order’ (Kim 2016:8). The point of interest here, for me in the context of this inquiry, was that Kim’s (2016) view mentioned a point connected to the earlier literature review chapter. That of, a ‘beginning, middle, and end’ which resonated with transition and transition cycles mentioned in Chapter 2. I recognised that it would not be possible to precisely know, or predict, the types of narrative events that would emerge from the narratives given by participants or that would form part of the final story presented in this thesis. I accepted here that a chronological order of emerging events as part of the story about the experience of transition could not be prescribed, nor did I want to. The preference for an open-minded and flexible approach prevailed. It was important to acknowledge that a story about the experience of transition to become a university academic from practice is an event and one contextualised here in academic life.

I found the concept of narrative events and stories curiously interesting because through the research literature it was evident that ‘the central point is that people’s lives are storied and researchers re-present them in storied ways’ (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:227). As Kim (2016:9) expanded ‘by way of storytelling, we allow stories to travel from person to person, letting the meaning of story become larger than an individual experience or individual life’ (Kim 2016:9), beyond one experience of transition. The opportunity to gain more understanding about the experience of transition through other, or wider perspectives, used to study the phenomenon opened-up the opportunity to understand transition and to a ‘redescription of the world’ (Bruner 1986:7), the world of university academics from practice. In other words, understanding across professional backgrounds, disciplines, and to look at becoming a university academic in academic life through the lens, and perspectives, of professional practitioners.

Consideration of the research literature highlighted a spectrum of narrative approaches existed and various stances adopted by qualitative researchers. This ranged ‘from those who had a strong stance about the need to justify’ a narrative approach (Savin-Baden and

Major 2013:232) and those who at the other extreme who believed that 'narratives should be reflexive and almost psychotherapeutic' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:232). From experience and reflection, I recognised that I did not have a strong stance or favouring but believed that I should be guided by the purpose of this inquiry and the research question. Like, Savin-Baden and Major (2013:232) I believed that a 'need to begin with justification is misplaced, since it seems to reflect a need to validate and normalize the processes of storytelling, so they are seen as 'reliable''. For me, the stories about the experience of transition provided by university academics could be considered as reliable because they were professional knowledge-bearers and already social actors within this study.

The acknowledgement that a justification for storytelling was not needed here led to a reflection on two narrative approaches, that of life history research and life course research because of the connection this appeared to have to transition and experience. Life history drew some interest because it focused on 'people's stories as insiders within a particular setting' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:233) which appeared relevant. However, this approach was discarded because I was not trying to explain the situation related to transition, I wanted to understand it. I was not seeking to explore, or understand, personal history by looking at 'prejudice, misplaced norms, and assumptions' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:233) or the links between 'personal and social worlds' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:233) per se. Acknowledged was my interest in gaining understanding, an explanatory story, and mapping a life event (transition) in a qualitative way.

On reflection, I was opened to being aware of the life course because 'this approach involves studying a particular stage of life' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:233), which in the context of this inquiry was the event of transition that led to professional practitioners making the move to become university academics during the course of their professional career. As a concept, a life course was explained in the research literature as 'a sequence of socially defined events and roles that an individual enacts over time' (Giele and Elder 1998:22). Although it was evident that different ways of undertaking this type of research

existed it was more usual to explore a life course over time rather than in a shorter period, as this study aimed to do.

However, similarities between this narrative approach and the experience of transition existed as shown in the table below, Fig. 13, which indicated the methods that researchers focus on in practice. These were considered in relation to this inquiry:

Focus	Contextualised to this Inquiry
<i>Cohorts</i>	Professional practitioners who became university academics in the last five years and who have experienced a culture change, as well as transition, by moving from professional life to academic life – becoming a university academic from practice.
<i>Transitions</i>	University academics from practice who changed role and status as part of the experience of transition
<i>Trajectories</i>	Long term patterns of stability as viewed through the lens of the first five years in post
<i>Life Events</i>	Significant events that involved a change and often a lasting consequence which transition, and the evolving experience, matched.
<i>Turning Points</i>	A life event, such as transition, that produced a shift in the life course trajectory which a move to academic life, and working, did.

Figure 13. A Life Course: Contextualised to University Academics from Practice

I acknowledged that I was not in pursuit of a life course, but understanding, however after this narrative approach was discovered I recognised that there were potential connections and remained opened to the themes of transition; trajectories; life events; and turning points as part of this inquiry as understanding emerged from findings, was developed, and as life course terms were linked to the earlier reviewed literature. Those related to transition events and transition cycles. Like Savin-Baden and Major (2013:232), I believed that ‘what is really important in narrative research is an understanding by the researcher and the researched of the telling and retelling of the stories and the way in which they are located within the philosophical framework of the research as a whole’ and validated.

The advantages of engaging a narrative methodology were clear in that stories were known to ‘provide unique information’ (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:239) through the stories that participants tell but also this methodology was known to make it possible to

see 'how individuals construct and reconstruct identity' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:239). This was considered relevant here because, as mentioned in the earlier literature review, professional and academic identity were likely to feature as part of the stories about transition experiences. The knowledge and understanding gained through a narrative approach were interesting, and potentially insightful, but it also enabled a collective story about the phenomenon from a group of professional practitioners who had undergone this journey in their life to be brought about.

Although 'narrative knowledge helps make sense of the ambiguity of human lives' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:228) there are known challenges. Stories, 'can be difficult to interpret in terms of the relationship between the story told and the interview and the story retold in the presentation of the data' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:241). Relationships and the retold presentation were not problematic here, but it did mean that I was required to 'make decisions about story ownership, and how the story will be interpreted and reinterpreted' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:241). As such, the story here is owned, by the researcher and interpretations validated through methods discussed later in this chapter. It was evident that interviews were used as the research methods to gather the data.

The consideration of research literature, showed that 'the central concern in any narrative approach is that the process of telling the story as well as the product, the story itself, is important' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:227), this was no different for this inquiry. However, I was not of the opinion that a story needed to be held together by a plot. I believed that narratives (stories) did not 'always have a plot or structured storyline' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:230) because life, and transition experiences, may consist of the unexpected, things that disrupt and that change. I remained open to a discovered understanding.

Consideration led to the acknowledgement that the landscape of higher education was likely to continue to undergo changes during the time of this doctoral study, as was I. This was not a cause for concern but recognised here as an opportunity that potentially provided useful points for reflection especially in relation to 'place or sequence of places'

(Clandinin and Roseik 2007:70). Aspects known as important to narrative research because of the connection to generating ideas and consideration of feelings. During the design, it was not entirely possible to predict what the future changes would be, or what they might bring, or make assumptions about what might arise. I believed it was sufficient to recognise that these had the potential to exist and that I was required, as much as possible, to 'stay awake as to how place shifts the unfolding stories of lives' (Clandinin and Roseik 2007:70).

I was conscious that a drawback of narrative research, especially when related to, or seen to be related to a life course, of which transition was, meant it risked being open to criticism about a tendency to 'focus on time and critical events too closely, as well as a tendency to ignore the national or global context by focusing too much on the individual' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:233). Throughout this inquiry this study remained alert, and considered, the landscape and changes that mattered to the experience of transition.

Another criticism might be levelled where stories were viewed as lacking in theory. Here theory was not forgotten or left out it was considered an integral part of the research process and design. As seen in the research literature, and as I considered it, 'stories are not devoid of theory: the meaning of a story can be elucidated by theory in ways that matter' (Kim 2016:34). As Kim (2016:34) affirmed 'theories are intellectual tools to help us better understand the meaning of stories'. These were used, and applied, as part of the design, conduct and interpretation of the phenomenon being studied. Here, the decision made to adopt a narrative approach was reached because I believed, and research literature supported, that 'a story can act as a verifying mechanism, or as a means of confirming or defending truths. Narratives approaches may also be employed as a means of sharing ... truths or life events' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:232), which has been done through this study sharing stories and events of the transition to become a university academic from an alternative perspective.

In the end, after a consideration of the usefulness of a narrative methodology, it was clear this approach was often used by qualitative researchers to collect the stories, to retell them which involved collating, interpreting, theming, and retelling or restating them in a

particular way, which here was as the collective story related to the experience of transition to become a university academic. But also, part of this approach, meant I was required to consider particularly 'how [my] own stories and stances affect the way [I] tell and retell stories' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:232) which happened throughout the stages of this research design. As such, I feature as a professional practitioner, university academic, academic peer, and the researcher in this inquiry. My presence, and voice, in the completed thesis can at times be found backgrounded to the participants, as a collaborative voice with participants and where the 'researcher and participant voice [is] the same' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:239).

Regardless of the way my presence and voice are presented, the primary focus was staying close to the data, to the narratives provided by participants. Their story and words are drawn on to help us understand the experience of transition and the evolving transitional experience. The interpreted story has been presented and retold using their direct words and where necessary for understanding or to share experience mine included. In the end I came to understand that 'the power of narrative is not so much that it is *about* life but that it interacts *in* life' (Daiute 2014:2)', and that is what a study of the experience of transition did. It interacted, interpreted, and retold a story that has advanced our understanding through this research and thesis.

The process of this research design was rigorous and has included regular 'pit stops' to allow me to reflect on notions, findings, experiences, and theories used. These periods of pausing made available through the research process meant that I have been able to use the time and space to take stock, tailor and validate research methods for use before a final choice was made. It meant that the research design used in the conduct of this inquiry was not prescribed but that the theories and theoretical frameworks followed on from others and emerged from each stage of the research process to provide the pathway for this line of inquiry. Great care was taken, and all decisions were carefully considered and informed from start to finish. I acknowledged that an inquiry exploring human meaning in a particular situation was 'never going to be as straightforward as observing' (Cousin 2009:9) behaviour and I considered this trade-off necessary because

complexity formed part of the journey of intrigue, and provided the motivation, to undertake qualitative research and to select a flexible design.

It is on this conceptual framework and based on the engagement of Narrative as the methodological framework underpinning this inquiry, that the research strategy was designed, research methods selected and this study positioned to be operationalised, as presented next.

3.3 Research Methods: Collecting Experiences

In this section the focus of the research design and framing was changed from the overarching interpretative framework to a more practical level. Here the research design and strategy used to frame, operationalise, and conduct this study was considered and reflected upon. I recognised that practitioner stories needed to be heard and this section is used to present the theory, assumptions, and research methods employed for collecting, transcribing, interpreting and conceptualising data. These research methods were framed within an interview strategy because it was the most fitting and appropriate instrument to use for this kind of research. Additionally, it enabled the study to remain fastened to a narrative methodology and to continue to be 'embedded in commitments' (Cousin 2009:6) to a qualitative paradigm. The related methods adopted aligned to the research framework and methodology.

3.3.1 Sample: Selection, Recruitment and Access

To address the 'method of sample selection' (Mason 2002:140) this section was used to present the frame applied and to gain access to participants from across different research sites.

The period under study was the early-career phase of transition, the first five years in post, which stretched back from the time of the interview meeting with participants during the academic year of 2012/13 to that of 2007/8. The sample ranged from practitioners who were relatively new in post to those who had been in academic life, or at their current institution, since 2007 engaged on academic contracts as lecturers or

senior lecturers. On completion of the interview meeting, it was possible to produce a table of the participants which is shown below:

	Interviewee Reference	Pseudonym	Male / Female	HEI	Length of Service (Years)	Professional Background	PhD
1	A	John	M	I1	2-3	Engineering	No
2	B	Simon	M	I1	0-1	Health and Medical	No
3	C	Derek	M	I1	4-5	Engineering	Yes
4	D	Elena	F	I1	4-5	Health and Medical	Yes
5	E	Marie	F	I1	2-3	Design	No
6	F	Alex	M	I1	2-3	Design	No
7	G	Ellura	F	I1	4-5	Leadership & Consultancy	No
8	H	Nathan	M	I2	2-3	Executive Management	No
9	I	Robert	M	I2	2-3	Business	Yes
10	J	Lisle	M	I2	0-1	Business	No
11	K	Bonnie	F	I1	4-5	Financial Services	No
12	L	Daisy	F	I2	4-5	Financial Services	No
13	M	Sebastian	M	I2	0-1	Business	No
14	N	Leonard	M	I2	4-5	Leadership & Consultancy	No
15	O	Mike	F	I2	0-1	Management (specialist)	No
16	P	Georgina	F	I3	0-1	Health and Medical	No
17	Q	Carol	F	I4	4-5	Legal	No
18	R	Nikkita	F	I3	4-5	Management (specialist)	No
19	S	Olivia	F	I3	0-1	Health and Medical	n/a
20	T	Sarah	F	I4	0-1	Financial Services	No
21	U	Hadrian	M	I4	4-5	Financial Services	No
22	V	Ralph	M	I2	2-3	Leadership & Consultancy	n/a
23	W	Steve	M	I3	0-1	Surveying & Executive Management	No
24	X	Elizabeth	F	I4	-	-	-

Figure 14. List of Participants

The List of Participants, Fig. 14 above, introduced practitioners by drawing biographical characteristics from interviews: gender, institution, length of service, and a general indicator of the professional field. Real names were replaced with pseudonyms and

numbers allocated to the institution rather than using pseudonyms. I did not set out to capture personal data about ages or nationalities, etc., however where these were evident or offered up as part of the story then the information was included in the table for example gender and doctoral (PhD) status. If a doctorate study was to be pursued, then I noted this in the table. A good sample size and sample of professional practitioners was obtained.

Of the twenty-three participants' twelve were male and eleven were female. This group included a variety of professional backgrounds linked to the fields of specialist management, engineering, health, design, business management or leadership, executive management and consultancy, financial services, and law. Eight were found to be relative newcomers, less than one year in post, six had been in post for between two to three years and nine had spent four to five years in the field of higher education. All but one of these participants remained in post at the point of interpreting the data.

This study explored the early experience of transition with a population of academics who had moved from practice arriving from different professional backgrounds and who were in the early-career phase, the first five years. Newcomers were interviewed during 2012-2013. They were found to occupy lecturer or senior lecturer roles inside the disciplines associated with their primary professions and fields. Most came from senior ranking positions to these academic posts. All were professionally qualified, educated to higher degree level, with two holding doctorates (but not a research publication record). The differentiator between this group and other academic staff entering academic life was the entry route taken, the professional route to transition to academic life as distinct from the research route. These university academics came from primary careers elsewhere and held first-hand knowledge related to the experience of transition making them critical to this study.

This inquiry did not seek to be based on a representative sample however to identify the population size related to academics from practice, staff numbers, and statistics provided by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) were reviewed. This demonstrated that the number of academic staff employed in higher education during the five years this

study covered grew. However, the information did not ascertain the exact numbers of academic staff from practice working in higher education or the professions they came from. Nor was it possible to distinguish between pre- and post-1992 institutions.

This was not problematic here because this inquiry did not claim to be representative of a population, but it did help me to recognise purposive sampling and snowball sampling (Denscombe 2007:17) as fitting methods to use to select the institutions and participants. As Cousin (2009:99) guided, the number of stories that I could collect was based on a pragmatic decision given the time available for 'arranging access, gathering, analysing and writing up' the analysis. Five to ten 'narratives from a particular group' (Cousin 2009:99) was considered plausible and acceptable for qualitative research. However, after a consideration of sample size, and on reflection specifically regarding the number of stories required, I was conscious that this study might be opened to criticism if the sample size was viewed as too small or not broad enough. From personal experience, I was aware a study set in just one institution might be viewed by others as being insular, too small, or relevant to one place of transition only. As this group of academics and the topic was acknowledged to be under researched in relation to transitional experiences, I believed a greater understanding could be obtained beyond a few disciplinary interviews, my own personal experience, or observations from practice.

I believed that because narrative combined 'views from the participants life with those of the researcher's life' (Clandinin and Connell, 2000), that the collection of stories needed to be wider. I also wanted to provide the opportunity for this study to 'allow space for the voices of individuals who might not otherwise be heard' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013:231). As such, the opportunity to hear the voices of other university academics from a range of disciplines was allowed for as part of the design of this inquiry. Twenty-three participants were interviewed from across four post-92 institutions of higher education in England.

I acknowledged that there were important distinctions between post-1992 and pre-1992 universities as employing institutions and prestige in the higher education sector. As Grant and Sherrington (2006:13) pointed out, the most obvious difference between pre-

1992 and post-1992 universities were that post-1992 universities became universities relatively recently formerly being 'polytechnics or colleges of higher education'. Historically they were more teaching-orientated than research-orientated. Although some post-1992's engaged increasingly in enhancing research capacity not all do. It was recognised that for some new entrants to academic life this distinction might make more of a difference than to others. In relation to this study, modern day universities provided a valid setting, and sector, to explore new academics from practice entering academic life because, although there was no official data to corroborate this, it was nevertheless the case that practitioners, who are very unlikely to be established researchers, were more likely to find employment in these new universities.

Next focus turned to a consideration of the most appropriate analytical methods to select and apply.

3.3.2 Gathering Data: Collecting Experiences

Within a narrative methodology, data here was referred to as word data because it was oral and interviews were typically used by researchers as the research method to gather data (Robson 2002:269), which was understood as collecting experiences from the participants. Adopting an interview strategy here enabled the oral data, the stories, and perceptions of the experience of transition, to be collected and as such I considered this approach appropriate here. Interviews aligned to the methodology which provided me with the opportunity to reach areas of reality that made the experiences connecting the past, present and perceived future accessible. Interviews are known through the research literature as a method that enabled a researcher to 'gather valid and reliable data that are relevant to [the] research question(s) and objectives' (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2003:245). From previous research experience, I was aware that interview strategies were beneficial to research inquiries which seek to gain understanding and a method commonly adopted in qualitative research (Perakyla and Ruusuvuori 2011:529) by researchers.

A criticism of interviews was they 'have an inequality about them' (Clandinin and Connelly 2000:110) because 'the direction of the interview, along with its specific questions, are

governed by the interviewer' (Clandinin and Connelly 2000:110). This was one way of looking at interviews, but not the only way. Here it was not considered problematic for this inquiry because the methodology required 'a shift from the conventional practice of treating the interview schedule as structuring or even semi-structuring the interview to treating it as a guide that may or may not be useful' (Chase 2011:423) when following the story, or stories which was the situation here. The interview schedule used in this study was considered as a research tool. Specifically, the schedule used to gather data as shown in Appendix 3 – Interview Schedule.

The interview schedule used to conduct this inquiry was designed to counteract criticism by containing semi-structured questions that acted as a guide for me and the participants during the interview meeting. The place where word data was collected. The interview schedule was designed to remain focused on the research question but at the same time to provide participants with prompts for thoughtful responses and recounts. The guiding principle was to ensure the interview schedule gave participants the opportunity to ask clarifying questions during the meeting and to add comments which, whilst being good practice also helped to counteract concerns related to inequality. Additionally, participants were provided with an opportunity to share additional comments or reflections at the end of the interview. This opened another opportunity to capture additional knowledge as part of the research process. Participants, as academic peers, were viewed as knowledge-bearers as well as social actors in this study. The use of an interview schedule enabled them to freely answer, or not answer, the interview questions posed.

The inquiry steered away from an 'oral history' interview approach where participants were asked 'to tell their own stories in their own ways' (Clandinin and Connelly 2000:111) because, from experience, freely opening up the interview for participants to tell their own story was considered too open when a clear research focus existed. Also, that type of approach had more in common with other types of methodology such as Grounded Theory rather than the narrative methodology used here. Instead, a semi-structured interview was employed, designed to contain guiding questions that elicited stories and

direct experiences. This set of questions was used during interview meetings to ensure participants were comfortable and able to share their stories of the experience of transition. The aim was to encourage feelings of a collaborative encounter rather than to undergo a more formally structured conventional interview. This approach was considered respectful towards participants as peers, and as knowledge-bearers integral to this inquiry. As a method it enabled me to work 'at transforming the interviewee-interviewer relationship into one of narrator and listener' (Chase 2011:423).

The guiding principle offered, and used, was to understand that 'there is no set formula for getting [participants] to tell their stories' (Cousin 2009:99), 'the only general rule across all contexts is to listen more than to speak' (Cousin 2009:100) and this worked well. This difference was explained to participants at the start of the interview, so they knew what to expect. Also, to bring a common understanding about the differences between conventional interview practice where participants were likely to be asked to generalise about their experiences, to that of a narrative approach where here they were invited to tell of their specific story, and direct experience as university academics assisting the gaining of understanding and the narration of a collective story of transition. As such, the participants did not expect me to interject or interrupt during the interview meeting when they told of their experience and story.

The interview process involved the maintenance of a professional relationship throughout. During interviews, the participant's role was one of sharing the story as I acted as the listener asking the questions, tape recording every interview and not interjecting unless a clarifying response to a question was asked for. Participants were encouraged to 'shape their accounts of their experiences' (Clandinin and Connelly 2000:110). Each participant was interviewed either at their place of work, 'home' campus, or through a preferred means of face-to-face communication during 2012/2013. When impractical to meet face-to-face, due to work or location-based reasons, internet video calls were used, and online interview meetings conducted in the participant's own 'home'. In all situations privacy was assured, meetings based on two attendees (researcher and participant), free from interruption where possible and a timeframe

allotted of one and a half hours. Most participants made use of the full time, and none lasted less than one hour.

Meetings were conducted professionally with the interview questions issued in advance, the scene for the interview process was set out before questioning began and consent to tape record obtained upfront. Having set the scene, I aimed to bring about a common understanding between the participants and myself by providing a brief overview of transition using (Williams 1999) 'transition cycle' before moving on to 'core' questions. Both prior to meeting, and again at the start of the interview, participants were issued with the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Statement (Appendix 2). Each person was taken through this document and asked to sign two copies in line with institutional ethics policy and procedures. One copy was retained by the participant and the other returned to me before the interview commenced.

A range of 'warm up' questions were used, I introduced myself briefly setting out my own background in context, participants were informed that the content of the interviews were to be treated as confidential, that pseudonyms would be used to create an identity for use later in this study and in future work. Numbers replaced the names of the institutions. I read out the questions one at a time and used slides to present the questions allowing participants the time needed to respond and to indicate when they felt they were content with their answers and comments. During this time, I listened, recorded, and asked the next question until all core questions were covered. At the end, a few 'wrap up' questions were used, and participants' given the opportunity to add final comments before the interview closed. Participants were offered the opportunity to have a copy of the interpreted findings, once finalised, and a copy of the transcript was made available if individuals wanted to read it. This remained in keeping with the spirit of collaboration and transparency. All participants were reminded of the option to withdraw over the following two-week period. None did.

During interviews, the key experiences explored in brief were:

- Backgrounds prior to becoming a university academic

- Reasons why individuals decided to move from professional practice to higher education
- Motivations, expectations, and perceptions about becoming a university academic
- Experiences gained having taken up the post and working in the new role
- Feelings, emotions, and realities during the experience of transition
- Lessons learned and hindsight for sharing with others hoping to make a successful transition

The result was a body of field texts that consisted of twenty-three interviewed participants; the same number of one and half hour interviews carried out over approximately thirty-six hours; a set of transcriptions that included creating a short biography (Appendix 8), taking three hundred and twenty-four hours to generate. Seventeen interview meetings were carried out face-to-face and six used the internet through video calls. Four sites of higher education, post-92 institutions based in England, were accessed as places where word data was collected.

Having set out the collection method for word data and the creation of oral field texts the next focus of this research design turned to the recruitment of participants and the methods used to gaining access.

3.4 Interpretation Methods: Questions to Understanding

The research literature showed that ‘no consensus exists for the analysis of the forms of qualitative data’ (Cresswell 1998:140). Therefore, features that interconnect qualitative research and a narrative methodology were viewed here through a variety of general interpretative approaches, those applicable to this study. The framing of this interpretative strategy has been presented in this section through the identification of suitable interpretative methods, models and computer-aided software used during the conduct of this inquiry.

3.4.1 Analytical Strategy: Nature of Interpretation

I recognised that the interview strategy generated a large body of knowledge and that the ‘constructed field texts may appear overwhelming’ (Clandinin and Connelly 2000:130), which they did. It was necessary then to choose the right analytical methods and systems to prevent the ‘quantity of field texts becom[ing] unmanageable’ (Clandinin and Connelly 2000:130) and ensure that a quality research outcome was delivered from the substantial time invested. Thematic Analysis was adopted. An overview and summary are provided in Appendix 6 with stages explained here.

I acknowledged, as Clandinin and Connelly (2000:131) did, that an inquirer ‘spends many hours reading and rereading field texts in order to construct a chronicled or summarized account of what is contained within different sets of field texts’. It was necessary for me to employ a system of interpretation that was practical, and capable of, providing the required level of sophistication. Consideration was given to systems and methods for data management, interpreting understanding, ensuring quality and electronic systems that supported this process. Whilst I was aware, and as research literature showed, ‘there is a large range of analytic practices in qualitative research, the three components of noticing, collecting and thinking can be regarded as basic elements common to all of them’ (Frieze 2014:12). This led to the identification of ‘The NCT Model’ (Frieze 2014:12) as a suitable overarching model as illustrated in Fig. 15 below.

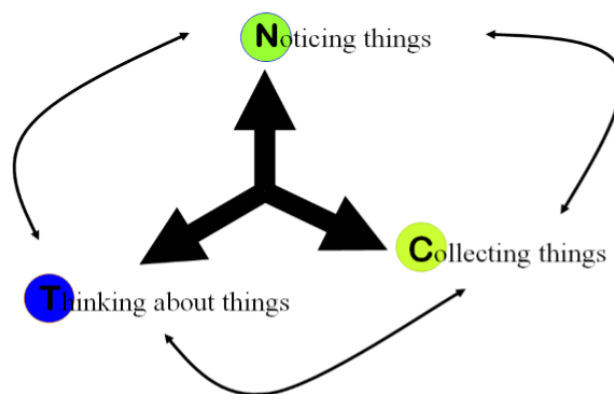


Figure 15. The NCT model of qualitative data analysis adapted from Seidel (1998) by Frieze (2014)

This model appealed to me because from the research literature reviewed, and my own academic practice, it was understood to be compatible for use with Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis System (CAQDAS), ATLAS.ti. A system I was familiar with and comfortable using as part of my research practice. Also, this model mirrored the interpretative process of 'turning over' the field texts through a recursive, cyclical process and a method that could be projected onto the analytical process at any level. The model or computer system was found appropriate because it did not act to 'prescribe any particular way of coding' (Frieze 2014:13). The flexibility required by this study was also offered as decision-making was left to me, as the researcher, in relation to the construction of a suitable analytical framework. A framework that focused on the 'underlying research questions, research aim and overall methodology' (Frieze 2014:13).

I acknowledged, and believed, that as 'each qualitative study is unique, the analytical approach used will be unique' (Saldana 2013:59 through reference to Patton 2002:433), which was relevant here. The interpretative strategy used was framed to take word data through three levels of analysis: an initial cycle; a descriptive-level (first cycle and second cycle analysis); and a conceptual level drawn from the experiences of Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Frieze (2014), and Saldana (2013) as well as experience from my own academic practice. The aim here was also to 'manage the data in a computer environment and to prepare [word data] for analysis and interpretation' (Frieze 2014:19). Additionally, to use the three components in The NCT model to start with 'noticing things in the data, collecting these things, and thinking about them, and then [in the end] coming up with insightful results' (Frieze 2014:12) to enable understanding to be gained from another perspective, that of university academics from practice.

I recognised as I engaged in this process that I was conscious of my epistemological stance and how this applied to discovering the real world being studied here. I was aware that the interpretation process, selection, and use of methods would eventually lead to picturing, and seeing, a window of reality (the experience of transition) and enable knowledge of the phenomenon to be developed, as mentioned earlier. The NCT model was compatible and 'compliment[ed]' (Frieze 2014:19) a narrative methodological

approach and the epistemological framing used here, so that was not a concern for this inquiry. It meant collecting and interpreting perceptions of the direct experience from professional practitioners through the different levels of interpretation and analysis, which has resulted.

The first descriptive level (first cycle) involved an exploration of the data captured in the field texts, to notice the terms and language used by participants and interesting things. This was collected and labelled during the 'initial first-stage coding' (Frieze 2014:17). The codes, initial labels, were used to begin thinking more about the experience of transition and to collect this thinking and emerging insights. The aim was to describe 'everything that was in the data, [label] it and to try to make sense of it in terms of similarities and difference' (Frieze 2014:17). This act produced a list of structured codes that were then 'applied to the rest of the data during the second-stage of coding' (Frieze 2014:19).

During the next descriptive level (second cycle), the codes listed were further refined through a process of carrying out a 'few more cycles of noticing and collecting until all the data' (Frieze 2014:19) had been reviewed, reduced, and categorised into meaningful themes for interpretation. Thinking about the research and the data continued captured through commentary in my diary, memo, and journaling to include new insights and seeking further understanding from the literature. Examples of the diary, memo and journaling can be found in the Appendices 6-18.

At the conceptual level, interpretation moved to 'look at the data from the perspective of the research question' (Frieze 2014:13) to ask questions and to 'notice things in the data but this time, specifically, the relations between them' (Frieze 2014:18). The process was used to progress interpretation and analysis by thinking about the findings, the experience of transition, 'to understand how it all [fitted] together' (Frieze 2014:18) and to start to see the journey as university academics from practice perceived it to be. At this point, the collection of things began to come to an end and the transcension from the findings brought the inquiry to the next research process, that of writing up the findings and final reflection. These steps are explained in detail further through the next sections.

3.4.2 Initial Cycle: Transcription

As part of narrative analysis ‘taping and transcribing [were] absolutely essential’ (Reissman 1993:56) as acknowledged here. As Etherington (2004:78) proposed, and as I viewed it, it was ‘*only* by transcribing tapes personally could we remain close enough to the speakers’ meanings’. I converted all the tape-recorded interviews into written (typed) documents to produce the field texts used in this study, extracted examples shown in Appendix 7. The process involved me listening to and typing up each individual script and the creation of a short participant ‘bio’, see Appendix 8. The transcription process here was seen as the initial cycle of interpretation because the method involved listening to the voices of participants again and the narrative. An analytical process that helped me remain connected to the stories and to get closer to the data through the process of typing-up audio recordings, rehearing each story from the interviews and creating field notes for later analysis.

Here transcription was recognised as a research method that distinguished narrative research because as the stories were typed and captured, I identified that I was engaged amid reflexive practice. It was for me, as Etherington (2004:78) noted from her transcription work, that ‘as we listen to and transcribe audiotapes of interviews/conversations, we will almost certainly be analysing the data and making choices based upon the theories we hold’, which happened during this stage. Throughout the interpretative process a researcher’s journal (Appendices 7-8) was kept that captured and ‘acknowledge[d] how [my] own experiences and contexts (which might be fluid and changing) ... inform[ed] the process and outcomes of inquiry’ (Etherington 2004:31-32). Criticisms of reflective practice may view this as self-indulgent or navel-gazing, but it was utilised in this study to gain value and assure good research. As Etherington (2004:32) suggested:

‘If we can be aware of how our own thoughts, feelings, culture, environment, and social and personal history inform us as we dialogue with participants, transcribe their conversations with us and write our

representations of the work, then perhaps we can come close to the rigour that is required of good quality research'

ATLAS.ti was adopted and used for journaling and creating researcher memos of decisions and actions from this point and throughout the remainder of the study, see Appendices 9-18 for examples.

3.4.3 First-cycle Analysis: Initial Steps and Coding

The next stage of interpretation occurred in two parts consisting of a first and second cycle of analysis at a descriptive level. This involved turning field texts through two cycles of analysis and interpretation using two research methods known in the research literature for this specific purpose. The choice of method for the first-cycle of interpretation involved 'initial coding' (Saldana 2013:100) and the use of 'in vivo coding' (Saldana 2013:91) as the method for coding and 'theming the data' (Saldana 2013:175), see Appendix 9.

Initial coding was applied using the in vivo coding method following a cyclical process to look for 'a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record' (Saldana 2013:91) and allocating this word a code. To ensure validity, participants own terms, words and language were drawn upon to code sentences (label), sections, phrases, quotations, and for matching word data. From this, and through continuing to apply The NCT Model (Frieze 2014:12) it was possible to begin to construct a Code List (Appendix 10) with the guiding principle, as Frieze (2014:140) suggested:

'to think when noticing things, when coming up with good names for codes or when developing subcategories. [Then] ...to do some more thinking when it comes to finding patterns and relations in the data.

This analytical process continued until all field texts were analysed and the point of saturation reached. Saturation was viewed here as the place where no other new themes emerged (Frieze 2014:140). Using the code manager function within ATLAS.ti meant it was possible to build a code system by allocating and listing initial codes and noting quotations. Codes were not split at this stage because it was not possible to identify which

would be salient later or which would become sub-categories. With the use of the computer-aided system it was possible to easily create codes, recode and to note sub-codes that appeared, to have an initial connection, and to attach labels which were the terms being provided by participants. This was considered a valuable system for 'keep[ing] track of codes that [were] participant inspired' (Saldana 2013:93) and those that were 'researcher generated'.

In practice, words and small phrases were easy to highlight, assign codes (terms) to and record in the electronic Code List. All field texts were initially analysed in this way and when the first point of saturation was reached the initial code list was reviewed as guided (Frieze 2014:145) and sorted to help develop categories and subcategories related to understanding the experience of transition. The initial codes were not considered as 'real codes' (Frieze 2014:146) at this stage because as I saw it, they were not final or 'proper codes in a methodological sense' (Frieze 2014:146) but they had provided the initial collection. Another step was required to convert the representations into a higher level of analysis using a second-cycle of analysis as discussed next.

3.4.4 Second-Cycle Analysis: Turning and Theming

The created codes already had applied to them 'the words the respondents used and [therefore these were] very close to the data' (Frieze 2014:145) which enabled the analytical process used here to continue. The NCT Model continued to be applied and ATLAS.ti was used to capture quotes and salient points in a Code Manager. The method of 'theming the data' (Saldana 2013:175) was engaged to review and refine the coded, structured and stored data from the first-cycle. The aim was to start moving the analytical process forwards from a descriptive level towards conceptualising and understanding.

The codes from the first-cycle were allocated an overarching theme and these labels were then used to cluster all the various codes into 'families' based on the associated theme, see Appendix 10. Themes were drawn from the 'extended phrase[s] or sentence[s] that identifies what a unit of data is about and/or what it means' (Saldana 2013:175). This helped develop a set of themes that 'capture and unify the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole' (Saldana 2013:176). All the emerging themes,

drawn from the interpreted data, began to give a shape to understanding the experience of transition. Themes, or code families as also termed here, continued to be created using a recursive analytical process that reviewed, reduced, and categorised codes into meaningful themes until all codes were assigned to an appropriate theme (Appendix 11).

In practice, this method proved a valuable process by adding 'more structure to the code list' (Frieze 2014:131) and enabled big or small stories, positive or negative experiences, feelings or emotions, areas related to the research question or transition stages, to start to become evident and emerge. Reorganising the first-cycle data and codes in this way helped 'develop a smaller and more select list of broader categories, themes, concepts, and/or assertions' (Saldana 2013:207) used in this inquiry, as shown in Appendix 10 (Code List) and Appendix 11 (Code Family). Having one person, the researcher, involved in this entire process aided the closeness to the data and reliability by ensuring a systematic, as well as consistent method and approach, was applied. One where the software was reliable and did not take over the process (Frieze 2014:14) of interpretation. Thematic analysis dominated and allowed interpretation to bring about 'commonalities within this conglomeration of terms and to add some order to it' (Frieze 2014:146).

Theming of data proved a good platform on which patterns were explored and enabled the analytical process to transcend to a 'more conceptual and theoretical level of analysis and insight' (Saldana 2013:95), as described in the next section.

3.4.5 Conceptual-Level: Theory, Patterns and Argument

Having themed the word data, and identified code families, the first and second cycle of descriptive analysis were completed. Another set of methods were employed to finish the last phase of this interpretative framework, known here as the level of conceptual analysis. This was necessary to make sense of the interpreted themes so that an understanding of the experience of transition could be drawn from the findings. This move to a higher level of analytical and intellectual thinking involved engaging interpretative methods 'to look for relations and patterns in the data with the ultimate aim of integrating all the findings to tell a coherent story' (Frieze 2014:152).

This was the last time that the field texts were turned over to the process of analysis before the final research text, this thesis, was written-up. This last phase involved organising the data corpus and 'attribut[ing] meaning to that organization' (Saldana 2013:209). In other words, the developed categories were taken and used to identify patterns. Patterns that helped give meaning to the experience of transition and that assisted with understanding the evolving transitional experience by clustering, reorganising, and reassembling findings. This involved turning field texts through two more analytical levels using Pattern Coding (Saldana 2013:209), and Theoretical Coding (Saldana 2013:250). Examples are provided in Appendices 12-15 respectively.

Pattern Coding (Saldana 2013:209) involved a level of meta synthesis focused on the themes located earlier and the continuing use of The NCT Model. At this stage, the use of ATLAS.ti ended other than to return to the system to locate, or interrogate, the supporting quotations used in the analysis process or to ensure these quotations were kept rooted in their context. 'Theoretical Coding' (Saldana 2013:250) was engaged to assist with locating 'a central/core category' (Saldana 2013:209) resulting in an overarching concept code which for this inquiry was interpreted as a 'game' because it aptly framed the phases of transition passed through by participants, see Appendix 16. A metaphor found to identify with the term used by Lucas (2006) in her work related to 'the research game in academic life', as discussed in Chapter 2. Together, the terms used by participants and this concept code (metaphor) provided and inspired the title of this thesis, *Becoming University Academics from Practice: Finding, Learning and Playing*. Also, a visual representation of the experience of transition as perceived by university academics from practice resulted, see Appendix 16.

Additionally, the application of this conceptual level of analysis involved returning to Williams (1999) transition cycle, and the combined models presented in Chapter 2 (Figures 8 and 9), to use as a theoretical lens through which to view the experience of transition. This moved the level of interpretation away from the particulars found during coding and theming to one of abstraction which provided an interpretative method for comparing and contrasting phases, and features, of transition. Through this I was able to

identify differences, gain new insights and build on from what was already known in the research literature, and doing so from within the overarching narrative methodology and qualitative paradigm.

In practice, the culmination of the various stages contained in the research process of data analysis and interpretation worked well. The combination has addressed the research question and, as a practical outcome, contributed to improvements in the experience of practitioners entering higher education and developing academic careers.

3.4.6 Criticisms of Analytical Processes and Models

I acknowledged that all research, regardless of the coding models and analytical methods used are open to criticism, this section addressed those relevant to this qualitative inquiry. During the design of the interpretative strategy, consideration was given to ensuring quality research and I recognised that there were critics of coding or theming methods who considered them to be: 'reductionist'; 'subjective'; and 'distant' from the data.

To answer such criticism, facts were drawn from those experienced and expert in the field of qualitative research having used coding and theming in practice. Their views, as mine do, circulated around the belief that 'coding is what you perceive it to be. If you see it as reductionist, then that is what it will be for you' (Saldana 2013:38). Gaining an understanding of the experience of transition from a different perspective meant it was necessary to employ research methods that narrowed down a large body of word data. Coding and theming provided the most fitting way to do this here and enabled the research question to be answered.

The next criticism suggested that objectivity was likely to be virtually impossible because 'we each most likely perceive the social world differently, we will therefore experience it differently, interpret it differently ... analyse it differently and write about it differently' (Saldana 2013:39). This was not a concern here because this study did not set out to claim to be at the extremes of objectivity, or subjectivity, having adopted an epistemological associated with integration and a position that opened up this inquiry to

the potential for new insights to be discovered. This, as I viewed it, made this study exciting because the unknowns were yet to be identified.

Far from creating 'distance', the research methods here were designed to use an interpretative strategy that was recursive, requiring me to go backwards and forwards over the data numerous times. The continuous process of noticing things, collecting things, and thinking about things (Frieze 2014:12) resulted in closeness to the data throughout the different analytical levels. The levels of collecting word data, transcription, descriptive and conceptual analysis. Some distance was built in through pauses for reflection, engagement with critical friendship (academic peers and colleagues) as well as discussions with supervisors to ensure a balanced view. As a result, what came about was, as Saldana (2013:39) suggested, and as I experienced, a:

'Total immersion in [the] data corpus with the outcome being exponential and intimate familiarity with its details, subtleties, and nuances. When [the researcher] can quote verbatim by memory what a participant said from [the] data corpus and remember its accompanying code'

In practice, this interpretative framework, and the conduct of this research, did not distance me from the work but connected me as part of the research process. The data did not simply 'emerge', I helped to bring interpretation to the inquiry adding my 'personal signature' (Saldana 2013:39) in ways that other inquiries and methods might not allow for. This was achieved and consistent with a pragmatic approach. Making the right decisions involved 'choosing the right tool for the right job' (Saldana 2013:2). In this respect, this study was framed appropriately and carefully after full consideration was given to analytical methods and alignment, to a narrative methodology and the research question, assured. As such, Fig. 16 sets out the interpretative framework employed here to understand the experience of transition from the perspectives of professional practitioners:

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Figure 16. Interpretative Framework: Understanding the Experience of Transition (Seale 1999)

3.5 Assuring the Quality of Research

In keeping with traditions and cultures of a qualitative paradigm constructed to gain 'understanding and insight' (Cousin 2009:9), it was necessary to consider the way in which the quality of this research was assured as part of framing and conducting this inquiry. Consultation with the research literature and having drawn on the experience of those with expertise in applying a narrative methodology, meant it was possible to identify from an 'interpretivist criteriology' (Seale 1999:42) a set of concerns, issues and criticisms of qualitative research as identified in Fig. 17. Areas addressed here during framing and the research design process.

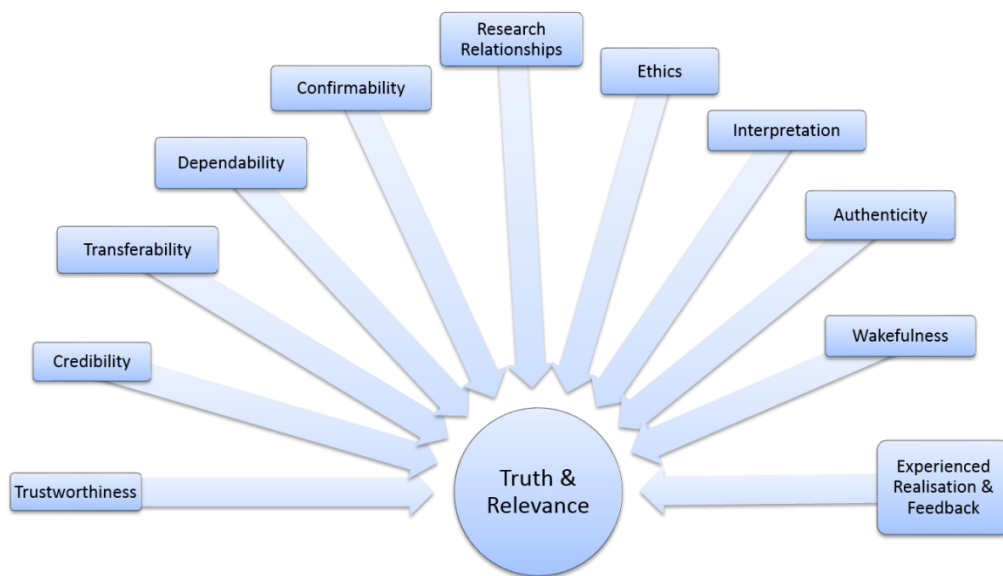


Figure 17.. Interpretivist Criteria for Understanding Transition

Having acknowledged the importance of assuring quality research meant giving this inquiry ‘its proper and appropriate set’ (Guba and Lincoln 1989:251) of criteria. The guiding principle adopted here was to keep in mind the relevant ‘goodness criteria’ (Guba and Lincoln 1989:251), understood in this study as the criteria to assure quality, and to use this to make informed choices and decisions. This set of criteria provided the quality assurance standards used next to discuss and present my positionality in relation to them. Set out also was the ways this research design dealt with known problems and the actions taken to prevent associated risks from becoming problematic during the conduct of this inquiry.

3.5.1 Truth and Relevance

The construction of these standards used a variety of techniques associated with good studies and found of value in providing guidance (Seale 1999:47) on what is, and was not, considered permissible for qualitative research. Two ‘broad areas of concern: truth and relevance’ (Seale 1999:47) were identified as the key overarching criteria from which all

others fall. I acknowledged that no one single criterion or method existed for use, and that a narrative methodology involved the replacement of general criterion connected with more conventional and positivist studies with a specific set relevant to this study. As such, consideration was given to techniques that applied to the study of the phenomenon.

For this line of inquiry, the terms known as validity, trustworthiness, reliability, and generalisability were different and ‘credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability replac[ed] the usual positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity’ (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:24). As narrative approaches involved ‘a particular set of issues concerning the research relationship, ethics, interpretation, and validity’ (Chase 2011:423), along with ‘wakefulness’ (Clandinin and Connelly 2000:184) these were included and considered as part of the adopted criteria. The founding premise of trust and relevance was what this study continued to be framed, designed, and conducted on.

3.5.2 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness here did not claim to go in search of ‘one truth’ and was not constructed to assume, or imagine, that somewhere ‘out there’ in the world existed ‘a variety of ‘answers’ to the problems researchers face’ (Seale 1999:20). That was not the purpose of this research: understanding the experience of transition from the perspectives of university academics from practice was. Here I accepted that locating the existence of ‘one truth’ was not deemed possible nor was this a desired outcome of this research inquiry. Concerns related to ‘one truth’ were not relevant to this study because trustworthiness was assured through the engagement of well-known, and proven, validation strategies. For example, ‘member checks ... and audit trails’ (Kim 2016:99), peer review and feedback as highlighted in this chapter and shown through practice.

3.5.3 Member Checking

Member checks were known to involve checking ‘interpretations with members’ (Guba and Lincoln 1989:238) after transcription and were included within the Informed Consent process, Appendix 2 (Participant Information Sheet and Consent Statement). In the field

of qualitative research, and as viewed here, this practice was acknowledged as 'the single most crucial technique for establishing credibility' (Guba and Lincoln 1989:239) and establishing trustworthiness. With a study of this nature, multiple realities (perceptions) were possible. Consequently, 'the most certain test is verifying those multiple constructions with those who provided them' (Guba and Lincoln 1989:239), the participants. Participants, although busy university academics, were given the opportunity to 'change or to correct errors of fact or errors of interpretation' (Guba and Lincoln 1989:239) in relation to transcription and the 'interpretations [I] had made' (Robson 2002:75) during the interpretation stage. This attempted to guard against researcher bias and was used here to demonstrate to participants the value of their input into this inquiry, an approach I considered here as respectful.

Having returned the typed-up interview transcripts to participants none requested amendments (changes or additions). I received comments on the reflective nature of the approach, its timeliness, and the way this made them think and re-evaluate their transitional journey but also where they currently were at. One participant mentioned that they had found involvement in this study to be cathartic as it enabled them, for the first time, to sit down, reflect and consider the experience of transition along with various aspects, emotions, and feelings brought to the forefront to be dealt with.

When the findings from the research text were returned feedback was received in relation to what this meant to them personally, what they learned, the identified actions and comments on how I might improve my work. This feedback gave me encouragement. It helped me to see how this study was beneficial, how it returned insights and knowledge that had been deemed valuable to the participants and given them the chance to be part of an inquiry that was pertinent to their academic life. Members posed questions to me that brought about further considerations regarding the transitional route from professional practice. For example, was this the only route that the experience of transition applied to within academic life. Participants learned that about where they were in their journey, and academic career, from the collective story and the transition model but what I found of interest was that most who replied did so in relation to the

phases of 'learning' and 'playing', where they located themselves. Examples can be found in Appendix 19.

3.5.4 Critical Feedback and Friendship

Interpretations were tested against critical feedback and subjected to ongoing critique from the supervisory team, academic peers, and non-academic colleagues during the various stages of this research process. This has exposed this research to a stringent and robust test over its duration. It demonstrated also 'the researcher's willingness to engage with criteria such as ... honesty, sincerity, and truthfulness' (McNiff 2007:320). The process helped assure the quality of this study by gaining critical feedback at all the research levels. This enabled the creation, and writing-up, of a research thesis that 'reflects a self-questioning methodological awareness' (Seale 1999:20). By using this ongoing process, I was led to further recognise the importance of 'having faith in the rightness of one's capacity for personal knowledge, bearing in mind that one's personal knowledge may be mistaken' (McNiff 2007:320) at times. This takes courage and as such, peer feedback, as well as constructive feedback, were important parts of this research process.

When methods of critical feedback and friendships were adopted, 'experienced realisation' (McNiff 2007:320) resulted. This approach tested the understanding of the phenomenon and the researcher's own values. It was acknowledged here that, to a certain degree, as Guba and Lincoln (1989:238) suggested, it was:

'obvious that no inquirer engages in an inquiry with a blank mind, a tabula rasa. It is precisely because the inquirer's mind is not blank we find him or her engaged in the particular investigation'

Feedback obtained from critical friends and disinterested friends, academic peers, who were given an opportunity to read this thesis, and in particular the findings, provided an external viewpoint outside of the perceptions of professional practitioners. Views that were reflected on and considered as part of the inquiry. I was encouraged by the feedback and comments particularly to discover additional interest from academic peers and the advice to continue to pursue this line of inquiry and research area. It was

unexpected to discover that this work brought awareness, learning, new aspects, understanding about the importance of transition, and a focus on the phases of Learning and Playing.

Of particular interest was that these university academics, who were not from professional practice, saw themselves in the study which led me to consider further the experience of transition and future inquiries. Routes to academic life (research) and routes into other institutions (outside of post-92's) were of interest. Whilst outside the scope of this inquiry it did open my mind to the application of the findings of this theory elsewhere. From feedback I took that there was value in this study but also that it provided impetus for others to reflect, to learn and to consider their future career pathways within academic life regardless of the time they had been part of academic communities. It emerged, as I began to recognise it, that transition was even more diverse and complex. Going forwards, comments identified I should not limit my thinking, or research practice, to one type of university academic. Like participants, these disinterested and critical friends, were interested and wanted to remain connected to this study, see Appendix 20.

3.5.5 Progressive Subjectivism

To avoid criticism related to truth and relevance, this research design engaged with progressive subjectivism. This simple, and effective, technique involved me laying out upfront a record of the different research activity and what I expected to find once the inquiry was underway (Guba and Lincoln 1989:238), which was done throughout this chapter. I acknowledged here that the multiple perceptions collected about the direct experience of transition those interpreted and represented by me were not done alone. Feedback was important and as part of this research process comments were obtained and feedback provided from members, peers, and critical friends. These were used alongside my supervisory team to strengthen this research inquiry, the findings, and the understanding of the transition experience.

3.5.6 Open Mindedness

Here, my 'primary aim [was] not to discover whether narrators' accounts were accurate reflections of actual events but, to understand the meanings people attach to those events' (Chase 2011:424), from their perspectives moving to academic life and work from practice. Here this meant the life event of transition and for practitioners a career change. This research did not need to, nor did it, claim that the interpretation here are 'the only possibility' (Chase 2011:424). Instead, the line of argument followed was that this study provided a 'viable interpretation grounded in the assembled texts' (Chase 2011:424). To counteract criticisms, I acknowledged that although 'one person's version may be as good as any other's' (Seale 1999:24) by taking a social realist stance I had decided to subscribe to open-mindedness, which occurred throughout the interpretation process.

3.5.7 Transferability

Having accepted that there was 'no fool proof way of guaranteeing validity' (Robson, 2002:176) within a flexible design it was evident that risks can be reduced. Appropriate strategies were selected and used in this design to limit the known threats. Within this qualitative paradigm, transferability was viewed as 'external validity' the stage where the research process moved the 'burden of proof for claimed transferability' (Guba and Lincoln 1989:241) to the reader from the researcher. As such, readers of this inquiry, through this thesis, have been provided with the basis to apply the study, and the findings, to other situations. Here, I considered that the opportunity was available for readers and practitioners to gain understanding and insights from this study. Subsequently, readers are equipped with the information needed to make their own transferability judgements regarding application to practice, transition experiences, insights and the understanding gained.

3.5.8 Confidence Limits

The acknowledgment that 'confidence limits' in this study were viewed as working ones meant that I accepted that these might be 'liable to disconfirmation or to assessments of nonutility, even in the same context, at a later period of time' (Guba and Lincoln

1989:241) depending on the study, situation or point in history. I did not view this as a concern but saw this positively because having accepted that research situations, and contexts, change meant there was scope for future research to take the study of the phenomenon forwards and to continue to raise the awareness of the experience of transition in other ways. For example, inside and outside of academic life, work, and careers as well as through different routes. This study has provided a 'snapshot' in time and in doing so it left open other opportunities for research to expand the body of knowledge about this under researched community, the transition experience and practice in this field.

3.6 Ethics: Approval and Clearance

Ethics was an important value and feature of this research. This inquiry was not designed to be controversial in terms of research however ethics and morals were taken seriously from start to end. A viewpoint held and considered here through each stage of the research process. My stance was that it was important to ensure that the research design, conduct and production of the research text were ethically and morally sound. Ethics here was defined as the 'general principles of what one ought to do' (Robson 2002:66) when undertaking research. Morals related to 'whether or not a specific act is consistent with accepted notions of right and wrong' (Robson 2002:66), which related also to my own personal values. These values applied generally and in association with my own values and positioning.

This section provided a reflection that identified the main concerns and the ways these were overcome. Here the terms ethics and morals were used interchangeably to ensure that the research design was ethically and morally 'right' and 'good'. The design and conduct of this inquiry were based on codes of conduct and principles that assured good ethical practice at all levels of the research process, which included data management and reporting. The codes and principles applied here were provided by Social Research Association (SRA 2003); British Education Research Association (BERA 2011); Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC 2006) and Coventry University's Ethics Governance procedure (2008/2009).

The overarching ethos taken from these, and combined with my own values, involved 'operat[ing] within an ethic of respect for any person involved in the research' (BERA 2011). This brought a responsibility to ensure voluntary informed consent, openness, and disclosure, right to withdraw, privacy and a reflection on the potential detriment arising from participation in research. All these areas were considered before this study began and were addressed during the doctoral Research Application Process for ethical clearance at Coventry University. The conduct of this study was exposed to a rigorous process, found to fulfil the criteria and as a result obtained full ethical approval to proceed (see approval confirmation in Appendix 1). All documents provided to the institution's Ethics Committee, and used in this study, are available in the Appendix with Appendix 2 providing the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Statement and Appendix 3, the Interview Schedule.

Following approval, these documents were used to select sites, sent to potential participants during recruitment and referred to again at the start of each interview. This ethical attitude continued to be applied to data management and the storage of data. Each signed consent form was allocated a unique code which only I had access to including the pseudonyms list. Full compliance with Coventry University's Ethics Code of Practice and the Data Protection Act (specifically where researchers are required to 'obtain prior informed consent from their research subjects' (JISC 2015) was adhered to. Participants were provided with the opportunity to withdraw consent; none withdrew from this study.

When conducting real-world research, I was aware that I might discover things about 'practices or conduct which present[ed] ethical dilemmas' (Robson 2002:70) that can over-ride confidentiality. This was not a concern here because no dilemmas were found to exist and regular discussions with my supervisory team continued to assure the quality. As insider-research, the main problem faced was related to not knowing in advance 'exactly how [I would] use the narratives' (Chase 2011:424). This was not a concern either and like other qualitative researchers 'short excerpts from interviews' (Chase 2011:424) were drawn upon. Assuring confidentiality when using these participant quotes was not

problematic here because the interpreted findings, chapters four to seven, used segments from the accounts not 'longer stories from individuals' narratives' (Chase 2011:424). Additionally, interpretation focused on gaining understanding using pseudonyms for participants and sites. Having engaged the process of informed consent participants were all given the opportunity to read transcripts and findings. This ensured reasonable precautions were taken to assure confidentiality prior to publishing this thesis.

Another issue linked to value judgements and arguments related to 'the position of values in the actual conduct, analysis and interpretation of social research' (Robson 2002:72). I acknowledged that during the discovery phase of real-world research, as Christians (2011:63), through reference to Weber's (1904-1917) work, confirmed 'personal, cultural, moral, or political values cannot be eliminated' simply because it was the researcher who has chosen the inquiry. This changed during the 'presentation phase' (Christians 2005:142) when it should become value-free because, as good research practice guides, 'findings ought not to express any judgements of a moral or political character. It was acknowledged here, that 'professors should hang up their values along with their coats as they enter their lecture halls' (Christians 2005:142). Although not a 'lecture hall', the final report was an academic thesis making this point no less pertinent when the research findings were presented, and I have aimed to do this as value-free as reasonably possible.

3.7 Chapter Conclusion

The chapter was drawn to a close having set out the Interpretative Framework, established the Methodological Framework as Narrative; identified the Research Methods, and produced an Interview Schedule to use to collect participants stories. The chapter produced the Interpretative Strategy used to analyse and interpret findings. It has undertaken an assessment of the research design, and the plans to assure the quality of this research based on credible criteria. Throughout, I made my positionality explicit. The institutions ethical approval process was followed. Clearance obtained to proceed with this research as presented here and signed off as part of the research process.

Combined, these steps ensured that the conduct of this research inquiry, and the final thesis, can be judged as quality based on a strong set of founding premises and the research findings. The conceptual framework and theoretical framing presented in this chapter were the ones used during the conduct of this study and the foundations on which the rest of this research sits. This chapter completed Part I of this thesis.

Having taken great care to ensure a robust and appropriate framework, I found it fascinating to discover amongst the qualitative research literature, a quote by Saldana (2013:187) related to transition. One I considered noteworthy in the context of this inquiry and particularly in relation to the research topic:

‘Transitions can be awkward. Whether it be physical or mental, the journey from one space to another can range from smooth and seamless to disruptive and disjointed’

As this chapter concluded, the move to Part II of this research study acknowledged that the findings might discover the experience of transition to university academic from practice to be ‘smooth and seamless’ or ‘disrupted and disjointed’ or both. The collective story had the potential to reveal if making the physical journey from professional life to academic life was elegant or awkward, which can be seen and understood next through the findings. Part II of this thesis, moved the inquiry forward from *questions to answers* as the early transition experience was presented in the three phases of *Finding, Learning, and Playing*.

Part II – An Introduction: From Questions to Understanding

Part II

An Introduction: From Questions to Understanding

The first part of this thesis provided readers with an understanding of this research and its context. Here, in Part II, the focus shifts from having conceptually framed the study, and implemented the research strategy outlined in Chapter 3, to presenting the research findings. Collecting the primary data generated recorded interviews which I transcribed during the initial interpretation process. This produced the field texts used for analysis and in the presentation that follows. As specified in Part I, these field texts were turned through an analytical process that included a first-cycle, second cycle and conceptual level of analysis during which the texts were coded, themed, and interpreted.

The experience of transition was conceptualised in Chapter 2, as a process whereby 'people unplug from an old world and plug into a new world' (Bridges 2009:5) and shown to contain three phases: a start, middle and end point. The notion of three key phases correlates with the findings here. Practitioner stories highlight three substantial themes relating to their experience of transition. These themes are used to present the key phases of early transition through the participants' terms as: *Finding, Learning and Playing*. These themes provide readers with experiences that lead to a holistic 'story' (Silverman 2005:316) of the transitional experience as it evolved, enabling key chapters to be organised and titled based on these emerging themes. Combining the three phases in this way takes readers through the experience of transition and through a new model developed and termed here, as 'The Early-Transition Cycle' (ETC).

The second part of the thesis is divided into four key chapters, each representing a different phase or explanation of transition. Chapter 4 presents the first phase of *Finding* organised into three substantial themes: opportunities for transition (4.1); self-selection and risks (4.2), preparedness for transition (4.3) and visualising phase one, finding (4.4).

The second phase, *Learning*, represents a middle stage and Chapter 5 discusses this as: settling in (5.1); environment and shocks (5.2) and visualising phase two, learning (5.3). In Chapter 6, *Playing* shows the ending phase as: place and identity (6.1); falling and adjusting (6.2); rebounding and evolving (6.3) and visualising phase 3, playing (6.4). In each of the chapters related to *Finding, Playing and Learning* the phases are illustrated and discussed picturing each of these stages of the transition process aiding understanding. In Chapter 7, the Early-Transition Cycle (ETC) is presented visually as a new model with the discussion reconnected to theory and the conceptual framework presented in part I.

Part II provides a rich account of the early experience of transition and discovering the three transition phases prompted a title for this thesis to emerge: *Becoming University Academics From Professional Practice: Finding, Learning, Playing*. It shows that having selected a more diverse population than previous studies, asking relevant questions and analysing the findings understanding of the experience of transition is enhanced. Each of the four chapters that follow on from here continue to open by briefly setting the scene related to the transition phase, presenting the findings, and using this to demonstrate where this research advances knowledge in relation to this study.

Part II

Chapter 4 - Phase One: *Finding*

‘Life is a lively process of becoming’
– *Douglas MacArthur* -

4.1 Introduction

This first phase of transition is presented in this chapter as phase one, *Finding*. *Finding* is the stage when practitioners discover that an opportunity exists for them to make the transition to academic life from professional fields and careers. All participants undergo *Finding* as the first stage of the experience of transition leading them to become university academics. Having used Thematic Analysis this comprehensive interpretation process enabled me to draw on themes here to discuss, explain and share reflection related to *Finding*. This chapter helps to understand the experience of transition enabling the research question to be answered. I draw quotes from the reassembled narratives embracing the participants stories and providing insights that are new, striking, compelling and of interest. As such, three substantial themes emerged within this phase of early transition. These themes are used to structure this chapter and to present phase one of the Early Transition Cycle, *Finding* as: *opportunities for transition* (4.1); *self-selection and risks* (4.2); and *preparedness for transition* (4.3). A visualisation depicting this transition phase is provided (4.4). The chapter draws to a close with a summary of the key issues defining phase one of the early transition cycle.

4.1 Opportunities for Transition

Preparation, letting go, first shock or adjustment were not the starting places where the experience of transition was found as models of transition cycles suggested. Instead, the first phase of finding began before practitioners arrived to higher education and involved individuals first becoming trained, developed, qualified, and experienced in professional life. Without the time served in the professional field, a transition to academic life from practice might be considered to be an unlikely career move. From practitioner stories, it was evident that few had considered an academic career until later in life, as Derek (N3) through a striking statement, helps us to begin to understand:

When the time came to leave school the careers adviser came in, and my mother was there, and he told my mother I'd be in prison by the time I was 18. I had never, ever, been in trouble with the law. I have never committed a crime. I have never even written my name on a

desk! I have always abhorred those sort of things ... but when it came to the careers fair, they read out about two dozen names, and we didn't go to the careers fair. We went into the next room, and I joined the army. That was the only option open to us ... I never, ever, thought that anybody like me was going to be in a place like this unless it was going to come and put the lights in. I never thought I was going to become an academic. (Derek, N3)

Derek (N3) had not considered that the time he had spent developing his career in professional life would eventually enable him to change the direction of that career path and become a university academic from practice, or that this career change would lead him to a role that he 'truly loved' and took 'great pride' in. A couple of emotions that connected here to those identified earlier in the literature review as Briner (1999:327) through Ortony, Clore, and Collins (1988) expressed, 'pride' and 'liking'. But here these appeared as more intense or deep.

Like Derek (N3), John (N1) had not thought that an academic career was a possible first choice, or even an available choice, for him prior to realising that a move from professional practice to university lecturer was possible:

I stumbled into becoming a University Lecturer ... I don't think that I ever set out to become a University Lecturer because as I have said from my background you never think that you are ever going to get there so you never really think about getting there. (John, N1)

Few professional practitioners began thinking they would become academics from practice. It is acknowledged that not all will want to either. However, as this study shows, there are those who are drawn towards academic work at different points of their professional careers or in life more generally. When deciding to move, having early insights into types of academic work and careers was found to be of benefit. As Carol (N17) pointed out 'I am very lucky my father is a Professor at [red brick university] who happens to teach the subjects that I teach'. Having someone to refer to, to talk to and 'advance contacts' as Nicholson (1990) suggested was (as one might expect) helpful but

not all professional practitioners had these connections or networks to contact or obtain guidance from.

For some, this meant receiving encouragement to pursue an academic career. However, that was not the same for all. For one practitioner in particular, this was not the case, Hadrian's (N21) father, an academic, actively discouraged his son from becoming a teacher in his native country because the profession was low paid. But when Hadrian (N17) moved to the UK, his father encouraged him to pursue an academic career. Salary was not something that featured in the models related to transition cycles but in relation to a job, or career move, this was likely to be key to decision-making.

From this, it might be reasonable to assume that social standing and lower pay might be one of the reasons why practitioners from different backgrounds, and countries, might not be encouraged initially to take up an academic career or teaching roles. This hypothesis is outside the scope of this study but may be an area of interest for future research to pursue. Having earlier insights into teaching and academic life through outside contacts, as Mike (N15) also revealed, was found beneficial and helpful when considering a career change or when forming early perceptions:

I would draw experience from my mum, who is also a lecturer, so certain times I would follow her to the University where she teaches and watch her lecture. That is where I got the perception of the lecturing profession from. (Mike, 15)

Practitioners stories showed that all had developed their own perceptions of what academic life would be like prior to arrival. These ideas were based on what they had come to understand this to be from their experiences outside of this environment, either through external networks or during the time when practitioners returned to higher education to obtain professional qualifications. The stories showed how some practitioners used this prior knowledge to make career decisions regarding which type of educational institution they would like to develop careers as educators in and those they ruled out:

I have family who are teachers in primary school and secondary school and I would not do their job for all the money in all the world! I think it is soul destroying. (Bonnie, N11)

It was clear that individuals had their own unique distances to travel to reach academic life from where they began. For some, this involved finding out first who they were, coming to know themselves, and then using this to discover potential areas of work which may, or may not, be in the same line of career or their country of origin. For others, the transition experience meant breaking away from what was expected of career options and the plans others had for them. The findings showed that, for some, these times were not easy and Nikita (N18), like some of the other participants, told of how the experience of transition featured stepping back into the classroom first as an adult learner wanting to improve themselves and their career prospects. This involved undertaking professional qualifications on a part-time or full-time basis before the move to academic life was eventually made.

The time spent in UK higher education environments as learners helped some participants become conscious that lecturing was an area of work they could, or would like to, become involved in and this resonated with my personal experience. Even though earlier education environments (schools) had not presented careers in education, specifically higher education, as career options the opportunity presented itself to practitioners later in life. The chance to move into academic roles arrived when practitioners became aware for themselves that this career route existed and that they could access it due to the applied knowledge held and the professional backgrounds they came from. As Bonnie (N11) described:

When I was studying [at university] I never even considered working in a university. I was in my mid-twenties and working in [the financial services industry]. I took a role in their training department which I really enjoyed ... it was only during a conversation with a lecturer about where I came from, what I had been doing, that she said we need to teach this ... it's on the course that I am studying and she said there is

absolutely no point in you doing this [module] because you have been doing [this] for years, how would you feel about teaching it? (Bonnie, N11)

Each practitioner had found the opportunity to access academic life due to their applied knowledge and professional experiences which for most, also included holding professional credentials in the professional field. The findings showed that being able to enter academic careers might result also from changing circumstances in life and work. For example, when a job role in professional life no longer provided satisfaction or the stimulation that it once did, or where potential future career routes were not attractive. Like Bonnie (N11), Carol (N17) found herself making life and career choices as her family grew up and when the opportunity of redundancy arose offering a reason to change careers:

I hadn't really thought properly about the academic [side]. When I was searching for jobs I saw [my subject area] at [this university] and at that time they only wanted 0.5 contracts ... I was absolutely stunned when I did [get offered the post]. I had to think very quickly 'is this really what I want to do?' I am really, really glad that I did accept it. But it was not really an entirely conscious decision to go into education I slightly fell into it, and I am delighted that I did. (Carol, N17)

All participants gained experience in a professional life and developed themselves using professional career avenues to progress and, if needed, supplementing this with professional membership beforehand. Individually, and as a group, practitioners held the value of accumulated experiences gained in personal, professional and study life equipping them with the knowledge and eagerness to share this with others, particularly the workforces of the future. Practitioners started to emerge from the findings not merely as a group, but as a community of professionals connected to their subject area through their profession and the applied knowledge about this field. However, it was apparent (and as might be expected) that this group was not connected to one another as a community of practitioners aspiring to become academics. Each existed in

professional life, work and communities of practice but were not networked to others who were considering, or who had, made a transition of this nature to enter academic life. All were found to be driven by the desire to change their career direction and to use this as an opportunity to transfer knowledge by helping aspiring professionals gain entry to the professional field through higher education.

When the opportunity arose to move, it was evident from the findings that as life's circumstances changed, or when professional careers stopped providing enjoyment, flexibility or satisfaction, practitioners began to look elsewhere. Individuals sought alternative career avenues connected to their subject area and expertise. Workplaces where they could transfer knowledge even if the new environment was in an unfamiliar field as Olivia (N19) shows, and some others suggested:

I looked at my supervisor, her role, what she was doing and I thought 'that's what I want to do!' I really loved writing the papers, I loved writing the reports, I knew how to do research and her role seemed very attractive to me ... (Olivia, N19)

In summary, practitioner stories relating to opportunities for transition highlighted the individual and varied nature of the transitional experience. Each practitioner makes their own journey, and travels their own personal 'distance', not initially aware of, or intending to, enter academic life when they first set out on their personal career path. Although directed and influenced by others at the start, along the way the time served in professional life acts as a training ground from which each practitioner then finds that another career option is available to them. That a transition to academic life and work can be made and another career developed in the field connected to their discipline. Phase one, *Finding*, shows the lessons learned by participants during this stage of the Early Transition Cycle (ETC).

Not only do newcomers learn that transition is possible but that the accumulated knowledge and skills in life, and particularly in professional life, turned into valuable knowledge that others needed from them. This opened alternative avenues of employment and futures, but transition does not come without an element of risk as well

as excitement. Here the emotion of 'hope' (Briner 1999 in reference to Ortony, Clore, Collins 1998) could be seen within the experience of transition. Sentiments of 'looking forward-to' and 'anticipatory excitement' and a desire to do something more with the knowledge, skills and expertise that had been grown through professional life were part of the transition process. But, as viewed here, it was opportunity, awareness and the timing being right that appeared also as key elements at this early stage of the transition process. Hope then developed.

For me, my own journey was not too dissimilar at this point of transition as I came to discover the opportunity to move to higher education later in life once I had, as mentioned earlier, established myself in professional practice and in the professional field. Unlike the participants here, and having reflected on their stories, I had been given guidance at school to seek a career as a teacher 'when I grew up' but this was not a step that I initially took. However, it is a moment in life that I remember and that I found myself being drawn towards in my mid-thirties after spending time, being trained, socialised, and qualified first in the professional field before being in a position to consider making the move to university work and life. Life circumstances, the opportunities presented in my own life course, good fortune, and the timeliness of events arising I found made the difference. No two people's journeys, as seen here, are identical but there are similarities that aid understanding.

4.2 Self-selection and Risks

Phase one of *Finding* featured stories linked to self-selection and risks tied up with the decisions to transition, to leave what was known and secure to change job roles. Each practitioner's narrative was different, but from the stories the impact of making the choice to move from what was established to something new was conveyed as an important part of the early transition process because the future was not fully known or predictable. Making the move did not come with guarantees of continuing success, it required thinking about, and transition was not a risk-free option for individuals choosing to move from professional life to academic life.

4.2.1 Assessing Risks and Making Decisions

From the accounts it was evident that motivations to leave the familiar ran deeper than simply making the move for extrinsic purposes such as increased salaries or to climb career ladders. Personal motivators were involved like the opportunity arising at the right time, the draw towards teaching and wanting to develop other people. For most, salary was not mentioned as a reason to decide to move but this consideration did arise for some which Nathan (N8) and Simon (N2) discussed as part of their assessment of the risk and the returns it would bring to them if transition to another career did not work out or if the salary did not meet what was required. The intrinsic drivers of change showed practitioners seeking new ways, and career avenues, to use the knowledge they had gained but with this came different degrees of personal risk. Drawing from the findings, it became possible to illustrate two-sides of the decision-making process that most practitioners became involved with, in one way or another, as risks were assessed, and decisions made about moving. Fig. 18 show this as the 'two-sides of the decision-making coin':

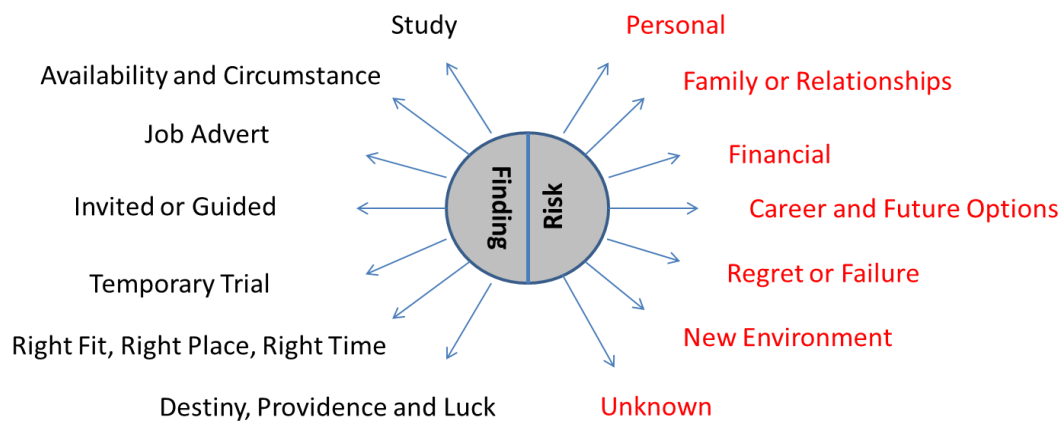


Figure 18. Early Transition: The Two-sides of the Decision-Making Coin

On the left, the diagram illustrates the different ways in which practitioner stories showed how they discovered that the opportunity to transition to academic life existed. Ways that included becoming aware of this possibility during study, job advertisements, being invited, guided and being in the right place at the right time. For some, being available and personal circumstances assisted with the move. A few were able to move on a temporary basis to trial higher education as a career option and a few suggested they

were drawn to this career with a degree of 'good luck' having a part to play. These aspects helped practitioners find the pathway that led them towards academic life. On the other side of the 'coin' were the associated risk factors with making such a decision.

From the stories, the themes and risks that required assessment before a decision was made linked to: the unknown; the new environment which would be different to professional life; the risk of moving and regretting it or failing to be successful; the risk of leaving established careers for a new career and not really knowing what the future options held; and financial risk that impacted on practitioners and also on their family or personal circumstances. Practitioners, as mature adults, had different financial situations and personal responsibilities that needed to be considered when making a career move to become an academic from the professional field. It was not a decision that the majority made alone, in isolation, but one that involved other people. Therefore, the decision to change careers was not taken lightly and was well assessed by all practitioners, based on what they knew or had been told by others, prior to accepting the post. However, as recognised here, decision-making was based on and limited by what these newcomers knew about academic work, life, and careers at this point of the transition process.

Practitioners expected there would be an element of risk, both known and unknown, understanding that this aspect of transition needed to be dealt with before they committed themselves to moving careers. Here the metaphor of a 'game' (Lucas, 2006) was apt displaying the element of risk as one where practitioners were considering taking a gamble and flipping the 'decision-making coin' to see what resulted when the choice was to stay put or to go into academic life to work. The reality was that in advance the full scale of the risk, or the return, could not be predicted or fully known. Potentially leaving a secure career meant that the associated risk for most could be high and far reaching, as Simon (N2) described:

I left a permanent role to come on a contract which wrangled with me a little because that was a risk with family, mortgage, and all of the rest of it to cover. I went for it because I have always wanted to have some

sort of teaching role ... I thought if I don't do it, and the opportunity never comes up again, will I get to sort of forties, fifties, retirement, and wonder what would have happened if? On the basis of if you don't take a risk sometimes things don't happen ... there was always in the back of my mind the issue that I had left a secure and solid job for something completely different and, to a large degree unknown ... they could almost employ me for a year and cut it off. (Simon, N2)

This statement demonstrated that practitioners needed to be able to accept a certain degree of risk and have reached a place in their own personal and career cycles where doing so was feasible. However, the 'letting go' (Bridges 2009) phase could not really start until niggling doubts related to a transition to another job role, a different workplace and future security were dealt with, and concerns satisfied. Simon (N2), like a few of the others, initially elected to crossover by stepping onto a temporary contract hoping that the promises at interview would come to fruition and permanency ensue. Others transitioned straight into permanent positions following interviews hoping that making the transition to academic work was the right choice. Here the 'feels good' (exciting) phase as alluded to by Williams (1999) was evident even if a little marred at times by niggling doubts or simply not knowing or being able to predict what the future would actually hold. This connected to emotions especially those suggested by Ortony, Clore, and Collins (1988) through Briner (1999:237) of 'joy' and 'hope' but also that of 'fear' (anxious, worried) as part of the transition process. Here a mixed set of emotions were portrayed before arrival to the new workplace and due to personal situations.

However, the level of risk was not the same for everyone and a few practitioners stories showed that some of the risks associated with transition potentially decreased depending on existing financial security making the move easier, as would be expected. Practitioners who had retired, or who were on the cusp of retiring, were shown to be positioned differently when assessing risks and making decisions to take up academic work. In these personal situations, the findings identified less risk and associated anxieties about crossing-over, possibly because of past successes. But also, because some practitioners were found to be personally and financially established, enabling them to take the risk in

the knowledge that if it did not work out other career options and avenues were available:

While I was in my last years of work, I had been developing some theories and some areas of interest ... it was just a natural transition. You start getting a reputation and people start calling you up. People ask you to take on things and it moves from there. I am doing this primarily on a semi-hobby type basis. I don't need the money.
(Leonard, N14)

This provided the choice also of how long new entrants would stay, especially if they found on arrival that the role or conditions did not meet their expectations, as Nathan (N8) stated, and some others alluded to:

'I am not prepared to live on what they offer me ... I am not going to stick with it'

The point here is that it is not only personal circumstances that come into play during the decision to change direction or when assessing risks but that age, personal security, and the ability to move onwards if the move does not prove suitable has influence during the experience of transition. Considering age as part of assessing risks surfaced from the findings to show that entering academic workplaces, from practice, at different ages, was not a barrier during this phase of the transition cycle. This provided the opportunity for career changers to consider a career move at different points of life depending on personal circumstances. These findings highlighted not just a starting point but suggested that another transition might occur, an ending, if the move did not work out as expected.

Like most of the participants in this study my experience of transition involved an assessment of the risk and making the right choices before I decided to become involved in academic work initially through teaching. For me, and like three other participants here, I was in the position where I could cross-over into academic work and continue to work also in the professional field whilst I made up my mind. On reflection, like Simon

(N2) I believed 'nothing ventured, nothing gained' and lecturing added to my income stream rather than being the main income generator. Regardless, it was a risk and involved more than me and meant giving time to another field of work as well as the professional field. So 'testing' the water was the way that I began but others, as seen through this study, went straight into the academic role which I accept as the riskier option.

4.2.2 Motivations and Reasons for Transition

From the stories, it became evident that practitioners had different motivations for deciding to crossover from professional life to academic life. When the right opportunity presented itself, or when it seemed to be the right time in life, practitioners narratives showed that any time during a professional career could appear to be the right time. Already being established provided the advantage of being able to accept a role to assist others and not having to worry about whether the change worked out or not, as Nathan (N8) highlighted:

I had fallen back to what I normally do [and] somebody I had met said 'I am really involved in this new venture called [university identifier] perhaps you would like to come along as a speaker sometime? [and] a week before the term started, I got a call to say not quite 'we are a bit desperate would you come and help bail us out' [and] it was exciting to be invited. (Nathan, N8)

For most practitioners, making the transition to higher education was not only about a career move but the motivation of knowing they were helping in some way and doing something useful with their knowledge and experiences. For Nathan (N8) this was being in the position to assist somebody, or an institution, out of a predicament at short notice. For others, similarities in wanting to help were seen in varying ways providing different degrees of excitement based on doing something worthwhile and new. For some practitioners, being involved with academic work was not only something they wanted to do, but an occupation they could indulge themselves in for as long it provided the

‘excitement’, the ‘joy’, ‘hope’ and ‘satisfaction’ (Ortony, Clore, and Collins 1998; Briner 1999) even if this was on a short-term basis.

All practitioners stories showed that this group was looking for interesting, meaningful, and satisfying work where individuals could be involved in doing something that offered a new challenge. The transitional journey involved recognising the personal and financial implications that a move to academic life might bring. Nevertheless, common to all, was an underlying motivation shown through the draw to teach and share knowledge with others aspiring to becoming practitioners in the field.

I realised how passionate I was about [teaching], especially the students who didn’t have the belief in themselves or anything else [they] were exactly like me when I was young ... I felt I was going to be able to add value. That’s what gave me a lot of joy. I had no trepidation about joining the University whatsoever. (Derek, N3)

It's probably a personality thing, and maybe a background thing, some academics don’t actually like the teaching bit for whatever reason which sort of begs the question ‘what are you doing then?’ But for me, that was the thing that I *really* wanted to get in to. (Simon, N2)

I had an underlying desire that I could do something, teach, or enter into Higher Education in some way and that had been a little feeling I had had for some time, probably a decade. So quite a long time. (Marie, N5)

I have always liked, the idea of being a Lecturer and passing on your knowledge to the next generation. And of course, I quite like the idea of discussion and debate say about [the topic] not just practicing it ... it is actually quite nice to talk about [the topic] and philosophise a little bit about [it] and whatever. That’s why I was quite interested. I had already made my mind up that I would like to be in an academic position and become a Lecturer, basically what I did. (Alex, N6)

My journey was about twelve months in the making ... I was at that stage where I thought well now is the time for me to move on and to do something different ...

I realised that I loved being around people who were developing themselves, I loved the idea that I could help identify people's potential and that gave me a real thrill ... I then went into a modern university that wanted people with industry experience, experience that I could pass on and [I took the advice] be who you are, be yourself a teacher.' (Robert, 9)

From the stories, life's circumstances enabled academics from practice to start to make the transition as they looked beyond professional life to other fields and reconsidered the options they had available to them. Transition to academic life was one of those options. My motivation to become a lecturer was similar in that I had wanted to help the future generation of business leaders and managers by sharing my own learning, experience and guiding them on their career path. At that time, I had not considered entering the fullness of academic life and work as for me this came later. I believed education made a difference and wanted to help others entering professional careers and the professional field with the knowledge I had gained.

4.2.3 Widening Professional Reach and Career Satisfaction

Alex (N6), like some of the others, pointed out that if the opportunity to move to academic life had arisen earlier during his professional career he 'wouldn't have chosen to have done it'. He, and some others, would not have left professional practice for academic life. As the years passed and time served in professional life accumulated, sixteen years in Alex's (N6) case, a growing awareness of other career avenues and the desire to seek job satisfaction elsewhere became key drivers for a career change, and for making the move to academic life. It was recognised that 'unless you move into management or senior management, where the job changes, that a lot of it becomes repetitive' (Alex, N6) and it was necessary to seek new challenges. This was found to happen when professional careers lacked stimulation, progression, or the interest that they once provided triggering practitioners to find alternative occupations where the accumulated knowledge and experience could be transferred to:

It was spurred out of future ambition ... I never considered the academic perspective. So having had industrial experience, being

offered the opportunity to come over here to the UK to do my Master's degree, a scholarship, I came and embarked on that ... when the opportunity was offered to me, to assist with lecture delivery, it signalled that I could actually broaden my ambition. To inculcate the authority in industry as well the authority in the academic ... it was really exciting when I got the opportunity and it fitted into my goals.

(Mike, N15)

There were several reasons why practitioners began to reach wider than what professional life offered at a certain point in their life. This finding formed part of the story of transition and the insights help appreciate the experience of transition through different perspectives and reasons for moving. Georgina (N16), and some others, referred to their careers and reaching the point of where they could go no further in professional life or where they sought a change of career direction as another avenue to develop in:

By the time I reached the ceiling in the [public sector] I thought this is not what I want to do. I think that I am actually going to make that step forward and go as far as academia ... it would be starting at the bottom of the ladder and working up again ... but I couldn't do it with a management position ... (Georgina, N16)

Georgina's (N16) reference to limitations in her professional role and development showed as a motivation to engage with academia. This was in line with the argument, shown earlier in Chapter 2, that educated people are likely to want to progress (Grant and Sherrington 2006; Knight 2002; Blaxter, Hughes and Tight 1998) and here Georgina (N16) highlighted that academic life was seen as an attractive choice for those practitioners who had reached the peak of their careers in professional practice. But this might also suggest, as Taylor (1999:97) argued, that academics seek 'positions with a view' in return for the investment made which might apply also to university academics from practice.

Interestingly, few practitioners wanted to enter, or continue in, management posts because this avenue did not provide the job satisfaction, freedom, or intellectual stimulation that they wanted from life. Academia offered an alternative option and career but few recognised, as Georgina (N16) did, that the move would see them 'starting at the bottom of the ladder' again, a step downwards from current positions. For Georgina (N16), transition to a lecturer's role 'despite being on the very bottom of the ladder, [was] somewhere where [she could] actually start, I can learn and actually teach other people as well' providing the reasons why the decision to accept the risk and to make the decision was made.

The move to academic life was viewed to be one that held a long-term future, involved developing themselves as well as others and a human endeavour that was meaningful and worthwhile. Making the transition was considered as an avenue that would open other paths and areas of interest filling a space that professional life had started to lack.

[Professional life] was satisfying but I did not feel like I was doing something that I really felt was worthwhile or beneficial. I perceived [teaching] to be something that would benefit our future [practitioners] (Sarah, N20)

Job satisfaction and doing something meaningful were shown as key drivers for transition with some, such as Sarah (N20), not considering academia as an earlier career option, but during professional life began to view academic work as a 'dream' job which became accessible through her experience of professional life. Lisle (N10), like three other practitioners, showed that for them the transitional journey involved passing through further education as lecturers albeit for a short time before they moved onto higher education. As Lisle (N10) noted, higher education:

Had been a bit of a dream for a long time because I was working in Further Education and felt a bit taken advantage of ... I was quite picky, so the job had to be related to teaching [identifier] and those jobs don't come around very often. (Lisle, N10)

Seeking career satisfaction in another area of work linked to the subjects and areas that practitioners had trained in and enjoyed was a key consideration during early transition. The stories indicated that practitioners were not fearful of looking elsewhere when work or careers no longer satisfied or where life's circumstances meant a new career path needed to be found that brought balance, as well as job satisfaction and futures. For most, finding a different type of career satisfaction also meant rebalancing their lives and this was shown through the changes made to their work-life, study-work or personal life changes.

Nikita (N18) and Marie (N5) help us gain an appreciation of the influences that important times in people's lives have: the life events that impact on people's personal decisions to move from professional life to academic life:

There was a point at which I had to decide if I was going to continue in my current role, be relocated and alter completely my work life balance, or was I going to go and do something I think would give me more job satisfaction. (Marie, N5)

I was not fed up with my job, but it was really hard to balance studying part-time and working full-time ... being a student means that you need to be around during the week which worked for [my employer] and it worked for me. But I think after a certain age you just want a weekend off with your husband. (Nikita, N18)

All practitioners, having developed a professional career, had been involved in climbing career ladders in the professional field to reach the positions they had achieved prior to moving. A substantial investment had been made already to accomplish this. When work or life situations altered, for example following organisational change or where balancing full-time work with part-time study became harder, practitioners' stories showed a time when it was necessary for them to stop and take stock of careers whilst still gainfully employed. But for four, the chance to take stock, refocus and consider alternative career directions was brought about by the opportunity that redundancy presented:

I took voluntary redundancy from my industry job ... I was at that stage where I thought now is the time for me to move on and do something different. I did not know what the answer to that question was. That was a very unusual thing for me to do, to go into the unknown ... I went through a huge amount of confusion in that period (Robert, N19)

2009 had been a very difficult time [for the economy] ... but by the end of 2009 there was a realisation that I had actually enjoyed doing the teaching. I had the opportunity to go back and do a little bit more and I thought maybe I will give it a shot for real and things sort of lined themselves up. (Sebastian, N13)

I wanted to stay in the training profession, but the options were drying up ... I thought that this could be the best time to make the transition into higher education ... to try out what it would be like ... [afterwards] I started looking for a permanent role. (Hadrian, N21)

During economic downturns, a few of the practitioners used this as their opportunity to look towards alternative careers and avenues where their knowledge and experience could be transferred. Higher education was found to be an appealing option and a means for them to do this as well as to help the future generation of professionals who sought to become qualified, and enter, the professional field. As the stories showed, practitioners transitional journeys were individual, complex, and far from conventional. Here by conventional I mean the traditional entry route to academic work and life, as found in the literature reviewed, research rather than the 'professional route' (Boden, Epstein and Kenway 2005:27).

4.2.4 Growing in Confidence and Other Factors

The stories helped to distinguish other features and personal factors relating to career changes that were not evident in the other transition cycles studied during the conceptual framing of this inquiry. A career move to academic life from established careers in professional life was different because this involved crossing from one professional border to another and entering a new field of work. Entry routes to become

an academic from practice were discovered by professional practitioners in a variety of different ways:

I had finished my degree ... one of my colleagues approached me and said 'we actually do not really want to lose you how do you feel about staying, carrying on and taking on this role? It won't be full time to start with but we will see what we can do?'. I had a big chat with my husband ... am I ready for a new big scary decision and another new big scary place to go into? (Bonnie, N11)

For a few, making the commitment to change career to become a university academic was a 'big' step. A move that some people might initially find daunting or 'scary' regardless of the time they had spent in the work environment. This was not the same for everyone, from the practitioner stories it was evident that some had already thought about being a lecturer beforehand but had taken the career path into professional life first. However, on returning to higher education as an adult learner, and gaining the benefit of other insights, this experience resulted in a few of the practitioners thinking about lecturing as the next career move and as a change of direction:

When I was a student at university, I thought I might quite like to be a teacher in later life ... much later life. I went to train in professional practice, and I was doing professional exams so I was always in the classroom as well as working. I thought that I would really like to be one of these teachers ... the best teachers for me have been the ones that have been able to say 'well when I was working and I had this client ...', being able to bring practical experience. I needed to get practical experience ... I thought I could do something [more] satisfying and started thinking about moving into academia before it [was] too late. (Sarah, N20)

The phase of 'encounter' (Nicholson 1990) was found to exist through practitioner stories, but this started earlier, as shown here. For some practitioners the event triggering the decision to move into academia was sparked when professional

practitioners became students again and through them experiencing modern learning in environments in higher education. Practitioners told how they gained confidence and recognised that a lecturing role was something they could do and desired to do next. Not only due to the experience of learning, but because all practitioners found education and learning enjoyable. All practitioner narratives showed that they believed in higher education, and this provided another motivation for transition. Here the findings connected to a period of 'adjustment' (Williams 1999, Nicholson 1984) which required awareness, understanding and navigation but was different. This stage emerged as a phase before the physical move to academic life took place adding new findings to prior models.

4.2.5 Personal Situations and Outside Support

For some other practitioners, the driver for transition came at a time when they brought up children. For eight practitioners, six women and two men, concerns regarding bringing up young families, balancing childcare with working life and career decisions resulted in these factors triggering practitioners to consider more flexible careers and working environments, as Ellura (N7) captures:

I was doing consultancy work that was coming to an end ... I was invited by a friend in [a college] to run a session ... it went down really well and I also really enjoyed the experience. I met someone from [another institution] who said have you ever thought of lecturing? ... I thought my practice could feed teaching and that my teaching could make sure that I was up-to-date on the latest research and inform my practice. I thought it was going to be quite symbiotic that the two would be mutually beneficial and my life was changing in that my second child was going off to school ... that parenting demand was not so onerous as when they were babies ... it was a slow realisation that academia had something for me. (Ellura, N7)

Not all practitioners had young children to consider, or needed to base transition decisions around childcare, gaining a work-life balance or the need to seek part-time

work. Regardless of personal circumstances or gender the theme common to all was a growing realisation that they could transfer knowledge, experience, and skills gained from the professional fields to higher education through teaching related subjects. With this came the personal needs for intellectual stimulation and to continue earning a living doing a role that individuals deemed worthwhile. However, as recognised here and through the stories this could not be fully achieved or realised without the support of others.

Practitioners did not accomplish, or make the transition to academic life from practice, alone. Nor did practitioners know if they would be entirely suited to the role of an academic at the start of transition, but all felt that they could be successful given the right opportunity and support. For some, it was a lucky break, others mentioned serendipity and others viewed the journey as being drawn towards teaching and academic work when making the career move was a feasible thing to do:

I was in a job role that I never really wanted to be in. I couldn't see a way of getting out of it. By some good luck, and good management by someone very close to me, they decided to enrol me on a [teacher] training course and [I] loved it! ... I [went] for an interview [at the same college] ... got the job and it was the best decision ever made because I wanted to do something different but I didn't know what it was. Without the person pushing me I don't think I would ever have become a lecturer. I would probably be stuck in the same dead-end job now. It's the best career move ever, and I love it. (John, N1)

As John's (N1) story highlights, all practitioners in one way or another had a support network outside academic life who were found acting behind the scenes. Practitioners stories showed they were not entirely on their own when facing a decision to change careers or the risks associated with such a move. Transition involved others: wives, husbands, partners, parents, colleagues, and friends. People who were involved, and on the side lines, helping to make the move possible in many ways, identifying opportunities and offering encouragement. This was important to practitioners providing the

assurances, courage, and confidence and giving a push in the right direction when it was needed, or connecting practitioners with people they needed to talk to:

... it was [my wife] that pushed really because all my life people have told me that I talk too much. I used to try my hardest not to do it but it's a compulsion you know! I said to her I talk too much, people say that I talk too much. She said 'you don't want to worry about talking too much you want to find a job where they will pay you to talk' ... this job opportunity [came] up. It was her who really pushed it and said do that, you'll have done all your talking in the daytime and you'll have done what you wanted! (Derek, N3)

My partner said I am working with someone who has gone through this experience they have gone from industry and are now teaching in education ... talk to them ... and what I heard [them] talking about were all of the things that resonated with me ... I had found someone who was saying aloud the things that I was thinking about but wasn't sure how to translate that into a job ... [that person] gave me loads of confidence. (Robert, N9)

As the findings showed, external support played a key role in helping to make transition possible. All practitioners had their own circumstances, responsibilities, and futures to consider as part of the career move making it a complex and individual journey. In summary, discovering that self-selection and risk featured during the first phase of *Finding* gave rise to identifying the existence of different feelings, thinking and emotive states ranging from being: excited, pleased, optimistic, happy and encountering new found confidence as found through Williams (1999) work. Additionally, these emotions as seen here as 'hope' and 'happy-for' (Briner 1999:327 in reference to Ortony, Clore, and Collins 1988) but missing from prior work was confidence at this early stage. Particularly, self-confidence because this was seen here to be an emotional component of the transition process and an important one. The stories here showed that practitioners made the move happen but also that transition was an emotional

experience impacting on the ways they felt and thought, which I can appreciate through my own experience of transition. Generally, the first phase was understood to be a positive period with positive emotions but also couched in a degree of anxiety associated with taking a risk.

This was a time when practitioners felt valued, required, and aware that new possibilities existed in another field of work. In terms of a transition cycle, it was a high-point related to 'well-being' and 'feel[ing] good' (Williams 1999) even if known, and unknown, risks were not fully predictable in advance. From here, the lessons practitioners appeared to take away was the belief that, if they did not make the career move when the opportunity arose, the chance might never come around again. Later, if they decided not to change career, this might result in practitioners feeling they had missed out on a meaningful endeavour and regret not doing it, later 'disappointment' (Briner 1999:327 through Ortony, Clore, and Collins 1988). As such, even though risks were evident and attached, all practitioners began the transition from professional life to academic life choosing to do so. This was based on what they believed the future would hold and what being an academic would provide in return to them.

4.3 Preparedness for Transition

During the first phase of *Finding*, the experience of transition featured various states of preparedness highlighting how ready practitioners were, or thought they were, to become university academics. Earlier, during the review of the literature, the theme of preparedness was identified by Nicholson (1990) and associated with 'unreadiness'. A problem where it was suggested that a 'realistic preview, advance contacts, self-appraisal' (Nicholson 1990) could remedy it. Although I had not found it surprising to find differing levels of preparedness appearing in practitioner stories, it did raise the feasibility of counteracting steps to ensure readiness especially for newcomers who were unfamiliar with academic life or work beforehand. This enabled understanding to be gained from practitioners as they told of getting ready to transition during a time before arrival. The narratives continue to show that transition is complex, individual, and varied even before the physical move is encountered.

4.3.1 Missing Insights, Illusions and Preparation

Practitioners did not know entirely what to expect with most considering it would be something they would 'love' doing and some perceiving it to be their 'dream job' as mentioned. The scene for this new working environment had been set during the review of literature, in Chapter 2, and shown as a site containing known 'struggles' (Lucas 2006) and a place or life that was 'as much a way of being' as it was of 'doing things' (Grant and Sherrington 2006:10). Being prepared for this required awareness and the knowledge of what to expect and what to look out for early on (Lucas 2006; Bourdieu 1993). However, for professional practitioners they knew professional life and work but at this early stage of transition their stories did not highlight what they perceived the struggles might be or what 'being' meant in academic life. New entrants were entering a 'game' (Lucas 2006) but practitioner stories did not highlight that they thought of their new role in this way. Instead, they were focused on teaching, moving and did not appear to consider the workplace of higher education as entering a game or being a game as the literature reviewed highlighted.

Prior research indicated the need for newcomers 'to approach academic life with as few illusions as possible' (Grant and Sherrington 2006:8) and practitioners in this study confirmed that they arrived prepared as best as they could and knew how. Preparation was based on perceptions of what lecturing and academic work would be like in reality, this started during a time of excitement that was energising. Time was a feature and had an important part to play. Not merely in relation to the employment start date but connected also to the actual time practitioners had available to prepare and sort out personal circumstances having been offered the post. For the majority this involved giving notice and the preparation time was short with the majority needing to serve out notice periods. Others did not leave employment or professional life entirely. Like me, this group decided to keep a foot in both camps, the professional field, and the academic field, by undertaking part-time teaching whilst still working in their profession and before making a final decision to cross-over to academic life and work.

From the findings it appeared that some practitioners had more available time than others to prepare for transition before they arrived:

I had been to the interview and they said 'right we need you in three weeks'. It was sort of OK, great! What do you want me to do again? I had to prepare the material quite quickly from a point of not having anything prepared at all. I worked hard to do that. To make sure it was right and to the right sort of standards, well my perceived standard.
(Simon, N2)

During these early stages practitioners used what they did know about combined with their perception of teaching or academic roles to prepare. Preparation was undertaken in ways that were familiar to individuals drawing upon information they were aware of from the time spent in professional life or through study. Variable levels and mixes of preparation were visible across all the stories. Most prepared for the transition to academic life by themselves, outside of an academic community or without socialisation within an academic discipline. Preparation for most was done with little support or guidance using what they knew about career moves already as a basis to get ready and inform decisions. But as Elena (N4) reminds us 'you don't know what you don't know' and preparation for practitioners involved getting ready based on what they did know about the subject or discipline which was understandable:

I knew the subject areas and I was given a workload plan before I came here so I had been reading around about the foundation degree. I was very aware that it could be contentious ... so I had read around on that ... the other bits of it, the sort of systems you can only learn when you are in and you are doing. (Elena, N4)

The lack of provision of key information hindered the actual amount of preparation that could be done in the given time. This led to different degrees of guesswork becoming evident:

I didn't do any preparation before I arrived [because] I didn't know what modules I was going to teach until I arrived. It wasn't as if I could do any of the tangible preparation such as reading around the topic or whatever. I was going to teach the things that I was involved with at work or had studied as part of my MBA, it was just a matter of refreshing ... I felt I pretty much knew it. It was going to be the things that blindsided you. It was that Donald Rumsfeld thing it's not the things we know, it's the 'unknown knowns' and it was that. It was the things that I didn't know that surprised me when I started the job. (Derek, N3)

Practitioners stories highlighted that they dealt with the lack of key information in different ways, and this could be seen to be associated with different levels of anxiety and excitement. Receiving prior information, as one might expect, was shown to alleviate some of the associated anxiety. This was especially important for career changers who valued giving good 'impressions' and being professional, as all the practitioners did.

I would prepare my slides. I actually have this impression that a good lecturer shouldn't look at the slides when teaching, just turn it on and talk. I find myself waking up in the middle of the night to rehearse each lecture ... I was trying to see how to manage my flow of speech because naturally I am a stammerer ... so I was working on myself to see how I could deliver it smoothly. (Mike, N15)

As Mike (N15) points out, part of preparation might include the desire to 'rehearse' and run through materials in advance and a heavy reliance was placed on the institution to provide the information needed to make transition smooth and to get academic careers off to a strong start. The closer the time came to make the transition practitioner stories showed a shift in feelings. This drew attention to the realities experienced by practitioners when crossing-over to teach subjects they knew about in an unfamiliar work environment. Each practitioner dealt with feelings, anxiety, and excitement in their own way, as the stories showed. For those preparing to teach straight away, practitioners

narratives revealed that individuals allocated the time they thought was needed without really knowing how long preparation tasks would take:

I think part of my preparation was just to pace up and down being anxious. That's always good! ... just making sure that I was well prepared ... I could always prepare in time for what was going to be delivered that week ... [but there was] always a sense of 'how many hours am I supposed to give here for this seven hours of pay that I get?' (Nathan, N8)

I had estimated that it would take me two weeks to write a module from start to finish. The lecture slides, all the seminars, all the assessment, but actually I spent between eight and nine weeks doing it. I had doubted myself along the way. I had made so many conceptual leaps through the process that you have to keep on playing back to yourself, reworking of the flow of information. (Robert, N9)

Albeit said with 'tongue in cheek', Nathan (N8) began to show what getting ready meant and the fact that practitioners were doing the best that they could to prepare beforehand. As Mike (N15) had mentioned, there was a degree of rehearsal involved and as Robert (N9) added this involved estimation, playing back and reworking the flow of information that was to be delivered. None of the practitioner stories showed precisely how much time individuals gave to preparing themselves for a career change, so it was not clear how long this took in reality. Nor did the narratives indicate the amount of time these newcomers spent researching about academic life and work to find out more about the academic job roles or career management, which from findings highlighted a later risk.

Derek (N3) had mentioned earlier the risk of being 'blindsided', arriving to academic life not knowing precisely what new lecturers were going to be doing which is evident across all the narratives in one way or another. The 'unknown knowns' highlighted a degree of vulnerability for new academics moving from established careers in practice and familiar work environments to academic life and to the formation of academic careers.

Practitioners risked starting out with the knowledge they needed about their topic, the applied field, but missing out on a familiarity and socialisation within a new working culture, the discipline, academic community, and work environment. However, stories of actual support and guidance rarely featured in the narratives during phase one of *Finding*, or as practitioners got ready to move:

I am the kind of person who actually works at the very last minute ...
[and] I actually went into this role not really knowing what it was all
about ... I had spoken to [other universities] in an informal way and I
had read about this but I don't know how much I actually learned by
reading about the role ... no matter how much I had prepared
beforehand it was not going to be enough ... it is learn as you go.
(Georgina, P16)

Narratives highlighted different personalities, confidence levels, preparation and for some transition meant embarking upon a new adventure thinking that the employer, the institution of higher education engaging them, would understand the background university academics from practice had and be ready to furnish new entrants with the knowledge and information needed upon arrival:

I did plenty of research on the institute, what type of activities they were
involved in, and at the same time I knew that because I was coming from
a different background they would not expect certain things from me.
(Hadrian, N21)

All practitioners placed a heavy reliance on the institution, because as I am aware from professional life and as the participants here were, organisations had a key part to play in ensuring success by passing on the information, knowledge and support needed and assist newcomers settle in. It would be reasonable here to assume that most of the information required by new academics would already be in existence within institutions, disciplines, the academic community, and academic life. Here the transfer of knowledge and information appeared to be a missing part of the transition process. But this highlighted also that unless those receiving newcomers understood their backgrounds, it

might also be considered difficult for institutions, or those working inside them, to know what was required and to match these expectations.

From this, potential difficulties were evident and aspects affecting the experience of transition recognised as the two worlds, academic life and professional life, merged. Pre-arrival, and the early days after starting in the new post, is a highly formative time and one where orientation (information, knowledge, guidance, and support) into the new role, 'being' an academic, institution, academic life, academic careers, culture and 'game(s)' (Lucas 2006) would be required for an effective, and full, transition to take place. However, during the *Finding* phase this was not strong, and time was limited.

4.3.2 First Shocks and Managing Expectations

The levels of prior preparation were shown to vary, as already mentioned, and with this came the realisation of how long it actually took to get ready to teach and to put everything together to deliver lectures. With this came an insight into the cost – the amount of time needed – during this early encounter. Here appeared a combination of what was recognised as a 'first shock' (Williams 1999) and 'adjustment' (Nicholson 1984) based on the time that practitioners invested, the actual support received, and the lack of materials made available. Most practitioners found that they transitioned towards delivering their first lecture alone and unsupported, but this did not put them off. These academics from practice showed that they were resilient characters, confident in knowing the topic and teaching their subjects in the discipline as they were not phased by being alone in the initial stages. Instead, practitioners continued to transition by preparing and delivering lectures drawing on their experiences and expertise from the professional field. They also drew from the academic knowledge gained through their own educational studies. None in this study withdrew or refused to continue at this stage of transition and were not deterred by difficulties or struggles.

In relation to transition cycles, this point did reflect a dip, a lower point, for some practitioners as 'inner contradictions' (Williams 1999) began to emerge as newcomers wondered about the move they had made. At times, this brought different degrees of 'uncertainty' and self-doubt for some but not for all. In the main, regardless of any early

jitters, practitioners were confident, looking forward to the new challenge and undeterred by the unknown. For some, it added excitement. It was clear that few practitioners considered in advance what an actual transition to academic life from practice meant. Few considered this from the perspective of becoming a member of an established academic community within the discipline or more widely:

I don't think I prepared for being part of an academic community. I took a pragmatic view that I need to earn a living ... I'll teach. (Ellura, N7)

Making the move and starting out in the 'game of academic life' (Lucas 2006), as new entrants, meant that professional practitioners needed to know exactly what was required for a successful academic career. Otherwise, 'once in a post, [they were] required to simultaneously be successful teachers, cutting-edge researchers and to show an aptitude for an increasing burden of management and administration' (Grant and Sherrington 2006 9-10), which is where these newcomers began from. From the findings, practitioners risked starting out in academic life and work focused on becoming successful lecturers and not aware of the need to invest time early across all realms of academic work and not just the one work area. Few practitioners began by considering their research profile or with thoughts of how they would develop their academic careers. This would bring implications later for most and was a missing part of prior transition cycles during the start or preparation phase.

Although lecturing and learning was identified as the primary role, all practitioners were aware that research had an important part to play. New entrants not only needed to be equipped to teach, but also to understand other aspects of the role and academic life known to include: research; administration; consultancy; continuing professional development; carving out future pathways or careers; and creating an academic identity (Boden, Epstein and Kenway 2005; Grant and Sherrington 2006; Megginson and Whitaker 2007; Boud and Lawley 2009; Blackmore 2016) but participants confirmed that information relating to these areas were missing during this phase of transition surfacing other risks that attached to the experience of transition.

Practitioners stories portrayed the ways that individuals had already started to form psychological contracts with the institution before they came. Features that would shape their thinking, expectations during phase one of *Finding* as well as upon arrival. For example, induction and orientation in advance and when they started.

Before I got there I thought I might have needed to know where HR was, what the policies were and what the procedures were to follow. Maybe these should have passed on to me before I actually got there so I could do some preparation. Actually having a contract in place before I handed my notice. I think what you might need to know, or do, is find out who has got all the information, what the systems and procedures are, how to actually manage students, what are the roles and responsibilities that you are to be given, etc., before you arrive. For example, are you going to be a module leader or are you just going to be one of the lecturers, how are you going to manage your students, etc ... you need to know all of these things beforehand. Then you can make an informed decision as to whether you want to go or not. (John, N1)

Regardless of how much preparation practitioners did, or did not do beforehand, the reality was that there would be 'things' to know which arose that new entrants would not know or be aware of needing to know. However, having the right knowledge and information at the right time, and in the right format, was viewed as one of the ways to help practitioners with their 'preparation' (Nicholson 1990) for transition. This needed also to be combined with assisting newcomers to 'develop helpful expectations, motives and feelings' (Nicholson 1990) from the outset. All practitioners expressed through their stories that if they had known what to expect upfront this information would aid preparation, decision-making and make transition smoother. Instead, transition involved learning after arrival from encounters, and resulting hindsight, as practitioners discovered what they did and did not know often by themselves.

Practitioners stories identified what could be done differently and earlier in the transition process:

If I had known what I was taking on I would have prepared more. I went into it with my big dreams and reality checked them. I coped but I think it was a huge amount of pressure and stress that I could have eliminated, or at least reduced it, if I would have been more prepared ... the rest I don't think that I could have done anything about. You had to be in it to understand what's coming ... I would have asked for [my supervisor] inside to talk me through how it is actually to be a lecturer during the preparation ... that's the only thing that I would change. Otherwise, I think you can't be prepared, you have to do it. It's like any job you learn, you grow into it or you leave it ... I learned to cope because I loved it. I learned and I learned within it. (Nikita, N18)

Learning and discovery featured, but it showed that a bridge for transition was clearly missing, not only to induct these new entrants, but also to provide them with an informed route from professional life to academic life, work, and careers. Induction was rarely mentioned as part of transition or arrival and, although it was inherently expected to happen, it did not occur systematically. As such, newcomers arrived to institutions, and into academic life, with different levels of preparation, perceptions, expectations, confidence, emotions and anxieties. Institutions, on the other hand, needed to be equipped and prepared to deal with a mixed bag of experts who were now university academics from practice, not from the more conventional research or study routes.

It became apparent that the levels of support new entrants received from institutions, and line managers, prior to or upon the first day of arrival varied, but generally was very little. Missing was support early-on from academic colleagues and/or assigned mentors. Where assistance did occur, these examples were identified as positive and enablers allowing newcomers to get started on a firmer footing than otherwise would be the case, as Daisy (N12) showed:

My line manager had already sent me all the information ... she is very well organised! ... She already told me about the subject I was going to teach way before I actually started the job so I could actually prepare for the subject[s] ... I was looking at the content and I was preparing for the lecture. (Daisy, N12)

An organised line manager made a difference offering contact, help and providing information beforehand regarding the subjects to be delivered. However, it was evident that not all the information about the academic role or work was provided with only one area being focused on, teaching, and not the other realms of academic work or citizenship but it was early days at this point of the transition process. Findings highlighted that university academics from practice were not seeking information outside of teaching and moving during the *Finding* stage either. Where line managers provided information during the preparation stage this helped prevent newcomers going in 'cold' and with knowing what to 'expect':

I had been told what I would be doing in terms of teaching and I had made sure that I had gone to observe some teaching before I started the job so that I wasn't going in completely cold. I had a reasonable understanding of what I was expecting in terms of teaching. (Carol, N17)

In summary, preparation for transition, support and managing expectations understandably emerged as an important feature of the first phase of *Finding* because this was the place where practitioners began to become equipped with the information and key knowledge needed to get started in an academic post and take up their role in academic life. Most practitioners felt they were as prepared as they could be having focused on getting ready to teach but information and knowledge was missing. All newcomers were ready to transition but not necessarily in a complete state of readiness for academic life or a career change relying on institutions to provide what they, as new university academics from practice, needed to know and learn about, before they arrived and early-on in the transition cycle and process.

4.4 Visualising Phase One - Finding

Based on the stories and the conceptualisation of the experience of transition this section unpicks the *Finding* phase. This was used here to visualise and present the first phase of the early-transition cycle. Using the combined transition cycle, as presented earlier in Chapter 2 (Fig. 8) as a theoretical lens enabled comparisons to be made and builds on from the framework. The first part of the Early-Transition Cycle (ETC), with the vertical and horizontal axis, is used in a similar way to that of Williams (1999). However, the shape here is different because this research adds to the features, transition movements, feelings, and cycles or ‘cogs’ from the stories identifying areas found to be problematic and in need of efficient knowledge transfer, relevant support systems for transition and management by various stakeholders involved in the transition process.

This visual interpretation is identified as involving a prior transition phase before moving to academic life and changing careers began. A transition phase which other models had not shown in the way this study does. Here it depicts the transition point, and the start of the transition journey when practitioners were in professional life and careers but becoming aware that a move to academic work and life was possible. The beginning of getting ready to cross-over and move to another field, that of higher education to teach as Fig. 19 illustrates:

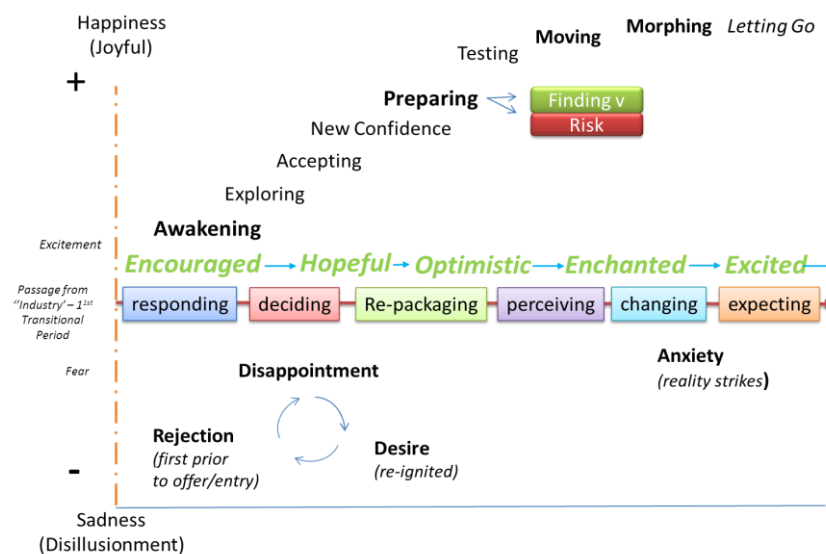


Figure 19. Professional Practitioners Early-Transition (Phase One Finding)

During this 'start' phase, it was discovered from the findings that the phase of *Finding* did not begin with a 'first shock' (Williams 1999) as suggested. Neither could key words in the combined model 'Conceptualisation of the Phases of Transition' (Fig. 8, Chapter 2) be seen entirely or evidenced outside of 'feels good (exciting)' and a time where 'preparation' began. However, various emotions and feelings emerged as illustrated. Some matched those suggested by Briner (1999:327), through Ortony, Clore, and Collins (1988) as mentioned earlier and additional insights showing the emotional work to be done as part of the process of transition emerged from the very start.

Findings showed this transition phase as the lead-up to being able to change careers and the place where practitioners were trained and socialised in professional life before the move to academic life became possible, or a transition occurred. This combined thinking depicted through Fig. 8 had suggested that the first transition phase involved; developing helpful expectations motives and feelings; ending by letting go of the old ways and identity; encountering a first shock; and a time that was exciting. It was evident here that the first shock appeared to be associated with an awakening, becoming aware or conscious. An awakening that brought the realisation that an academic career and life was opening and then from confirmation that the new job was secured, a career change was about to become reality. From here the features and feelings associated with early transition differed to the ways in which they were presented by Williams (1999), Bridges (2009) and Nicholson (1990) and this pattern continued throughout the other phases of transition as later chapters (Learning and Playing) reveal.

Not all professional practitioners were offered the post first time round and as such this brought a cycle that needed to be dealt with and transitioned through as newcomers passed through a stage of rejection, initial disillusionment, and a reignited desire to try again and not to be put-off. Practitioners moved through: responding; deciding; re-packaging themselves; perceiving; changing and expecting as part of the first phase as Fig. 19 above indicates.

Participant stories and the combination of models, which included Williams (1999) transition cycle, had provided a frame, and thinking tools that enabled this visualisation of transition to emerge to aid understanding. Also, this illustration was found to be one on which the transitional experience could be further considered and developed, as occurs later in this thesis.

4.5 Chapter Conclusion

Three themes (opportunities for transition, selection and risks, and preparedness for transition, featured in this first phase of early transition presented here as *Finding* and the start of the Early Transition Cycle. During *Finding* these practitioners learned several lessons discovering that age, backgrounds, prior experience of academic work amongst other things did not present a barrier to entering academic work and life from the professional field. The majority knew already that they did not want to move into mundane roles or into roles that were unimportant, but they did want to teach what they knew about, the subjects they loved, and to bring on (as well as educate) the future workforce of professional practitioners. Practitioners sought work that they were interested in, motivated to do and that made a difference. Work that involved meaningful endeavours and occupations that were intellectually stimulating, provided flexible careers, financial security, and job satisfaction. There was no mention in the stories provided of entering a competitive environment or wanting to compete with others, practitioners came to teach future generations not as a 'game' (Lucas 2006) but as something they wanted to do and valued.

From the first theme of opportunities for transition, it was clear that negative events did not trigger transition. Instead, this occurred when these practitioners realised that other career options were open to them because of their applied knowledge and experience of the professional field. Transition was viewed as a positive move. The second theme presented self-selection and risks identifying that practitioners were not forced to take up these new posts, they decided to, based on having the opportunity to do something different. Crossing-over was not a risk-free decision for mature adults who had responsibilities, and the issue here was that transition came with risks and without

guarantees that it would work out. Preparedness for transition represented the third theme highlighting the amount of preparation that was realistically possible prior to arrival and the time it took to get ready to move. The preparation process involved working out what was needed, and the surfacing issue was that this happened without really knowing, with degrees of guesswork and based on outside perceptions of what teaching or lecturing would require without considering precisely what joining academic life or developing an academic career meant beyond this. Practitioners assumed institutions would know what support was needed and that this would be provided for on arrival through systems capable of supporting the move to academic work and life.

This first transition phase had begun at an earlier point than other transition cycles, reviewed in Chapter 2 had shown, highlighting that becoming able to transition started further back in time. Few practitioners had been directed towards academic careers or academic life as options during the course of their life. Regardless of this, practitioners later found their way into the field of higher education drawn by teaching and a desire to develop aspiring professionals. However, employing institutions and the academic community had not featured strongly during this early phase and were not shown to equip these new academics from practice with the key information and knowledge they needed on 'how to' get started in academic life or on the ways to create academic careers from this entry route. This opens an opportunity for this study to assist with, for further work to continue, and for the other research threads located during *Finding* to be picked up and pursued by research and practice.

This chapter concludes phase one of *Finding* the 'game' of academic life having gained an appreciation of the experience of transition this far and insights through visualising this first phase of the journey. Next the second phase of transition, *Learning*, is presented as the 'middle' stage of early transition. But from here it becomes evident, and is argued, that if universities are to fully benefit from the experience and expertise of professional practitioners then there is a need for them to recognise, and support, the specific needs of these university academics and not to rely on the conventional ways to be fitting or

appropriate to apply to all university academics who are new to their institutions and communities.

Part II

Chapter 5 - Phase Two: *Learning*

'Learning never exhausts the mind'
– *Leonardo da Vinci* –

5.1 Introduction

The second stage of the early transition to academic work and life in higher education is presented in this chapter as phase two, *Learning*. This continues from phase one, Finding, showing the 'middle' stage as the place where professional practitioners have 'unplugged' (Bridges 2009:5) from professional life, either fully or partially, and entered academic life after accepting a post as a university lecturer or senior lecturer. Here the process using Thematic Analysis enabled the themes to be used to explain, discuss and to share reflections in relation to *Learning*. This chapter continues to help us understand more about the experience of transition and new insights are found and provided. *Learning* depicts a period when practitioners arrive as new university academics to their disciplinary fields and the phase during which new entrants encounter the reality of joining an already established environment, culture and one where they need to learn about the job as they 'do' it.

All participants pass through this second phase of *Learning*, and based on the accounts of all twenty-three participants, captured during the data gathering process as described in Chapter 3, this chapter presents phase two of early transition through two substantial themes: settling in (5.1); and environment and shock (5.2). This middle phase is illustrated and discussed (5.3). The chapter concludes with a summary of key issues defining phase two of the early transition cycle (5.4).

5.1 Settling In

5.1.1. Expectations and Realities

Practitioners arrived with their own expectations and perceptions as identified in Chapter 4. Expectations and perceptions that had already been shaped through primary careers and during the time served in professional life. The initial risk surfacing from the stories related to these expectations showing that these may not match with the experiences or realities once inside the academy. All academics from practice held ideas of what arrival to a new organisation would provide based on what they had come to know from employers in professional life or through their own experiences of managing new staff. In addition, practitioners had their own ideas about higher education, and all agreed on

its importance, especially around the difference this work made to the lives of other people:

I was expecting a dynamic environment. I was expecting a fulfilling experience because I think you realise you are moulding somebody else's life. So, whatever you pass on, your experience, your knowledge, your advice, whatever it is, it has an impact on somebody else's life. That was my expectation ... (Sebastian, N13)

Not everyone expected a dynamic environment, as Sebastian (N13) did, but all practitioners had expected that working in higher education would be fulfilling and worthwhile making the career move for. Settling in involved managing these expectations but the transition process here included different encounters that involved being an academic, entering academic life and being part of a disciplinary community as part of the transitional experience.

During early transition, practitioners narratives retold of a time that, whilst exciting, highlighted individuals feeling that they were thrown into learning about all the aspects of academic life without adequate information at arrival. Particularly when encounters with reality involved an adjustment to several areas where knowledge and information was needed. For example, adjusting to the new role generally but also coping with a variety of workloads, learning about administration, and understanding the personal changes needed when part of academic life, and a wider academic community. It was evident from the narratives that support with starting, and managing, an academic career was missing.

Practitioners stories showed that the experience of transition also meant dealing with the reactions of people on the outside, and their views of being a lecturer, at the same time as these newcomers were learning about the role on the inside:

My friends said, 'oh my goodness, you are a lecturer now ... you must have an easy life!' I said, 'you what!' Then of course you replay with people what you have been doing and they say 'what!' But you are a

lecturer, don't you just come up and do some lectures and go home again?' 'No!' ... as I look back at the three years, I don't think I have ever worked harder in this career from the amount of variety that you need to be doing. (Robert, N9)

Robert's (N9) story highlighted an outsider view of higher education through the comments of those who had not known the environment and who imagined what being a university academic might be like. Here I was reminded of my own journey and the comments or thoughts of people on the outside of academic life of what this type of work and environment was like as they imagined it. For example, that it was easy to stand behind a lectern and teach, the holidays, no pressure like professional life had, no targets, etc. Few outsiders, from my own transition, grasped or understood what *being* an academic entailed, what transition meant or that the 'job' was more than 'work' – it was a life and a community. Comments and ideas that at times I found frustrating and out of kilter with the reality of the move.

Through the stories, a few other practitioners alluded to differences in opinions when people on the outside had mistakenly considered lecturing, and joining the academy, as an 'easy life'. However, as the respondents showed, this was not the real situation and academic workloads featured heavily throughout the second phase of *Learning*. For all practitioners, workloads and the early experience of transition began to change their views of academic life based on what individuals had expected they would be doing, what they found they were doing and what they were 'becoming' as they learned and began fitting in to the new role:

I don't want to turn out to be a workaholic like them but actually I am that way now. (Georgina, N16)

This comment from Georgina (N16) did not mean that she, or other practitioners, shied away from hard work, quite the contrary, but reflected the early reality of having a high workload to manage and little time for doing anything else during this early stage. A second phase that appeared to be a transforming period especially as new entrants began to learn more about the academic role, the institution's expectations of academics,

the culture, and the disciplinary requirements, all at the same time as doing the 'job'. Encountering workloads and the reality of academic life showed it brought about changes in thinking and the altering of individual perceptions. Even though workload was not discussed as part of the earlier transition cycles in the literature review, few working in academia would disagree that academic work is demanding, heavy, broad, and far-reaching.

Here stories did not show the full reach across academic work areas: research, teaching, consultancy/professional practice, and administration as Boden, Epstein and Kenway (2005:28) identified as part of an academic role and career. It was clear, that newcomers from professional practice had a lot to contend with as they began to settle into another type of work and workplace environment. One that was unfamiliar, and where they all relied on the employing institution to guide, support transition, provide information and to help them get started on a strong footing. For this group of university academics, the stories showed that this did not happen as well as it might.

5.1.2 Learning to Manage Workloads

Stories revealed how academics from practice operated, managed large workloads, and attempted to maintain a balance between academic life and a personal life. Additional implications emerged when newcomers were keen to help, share, and take on more without fully understanding the consequences:

The workload has been really excessive for a variety of reasons. Normally because of my inability to manage it better, and championing in too many different situations ... I am a helpful type of person and if I hear of something I just want to have a finger in that pie. Sometimes by trying to help too many people. By trying to get yourself too much work and saying yes all the time! Then it just builds ... and you are left essentially with no personal life so there is no more balance, and you are totally dedicated to that. (Sebastian, N13)

From the stories the nature of practitioners showed as one of wanting to help, share, and support others which meant that for many they got involved in taking on too many tasks

or activities, or saying yes to things, when they did not really know what was involved or the reality of what this might mean later down the career line for them. Not only were most of the practitioners seen to do this at times but the institution was giving them too much work without adequate assistance in place to support early transition during this middle phase. Also, academic workloads were already known to cause tensions, struggles, and stress within academic life and workplaces as the earlier literature review had indicated. Narratives here highlighted the engaging institutions had not provided adequate 'slack in the system' (Nicholson 1990), 'social support' (Nicholson 1990), and 'freedom to explore and discover' (Nicholson 1990) or prevented known issues arising for these newcomers.

During the middle transition phase of 'encounter' (Nicholson 1990) the development of academic practice and learning how to 'navigate these tensions and competing pressures' (McAlpine and Ackerlind 2010:5) showed here as an important element of the transition process. Particularly, if 'confidence in coping [and] enjoyment in sensemaking' were to ensue but also 'safety' (Nicholson 1990) or wellbeing at work. However, from practitioner stories adequate and fitting support for transition was not evident and an emerging concern. From the stories, the reality of transition continued to be highlighted and this was shown to have wider and unexpected impacts:

I have looked at the hours that I am allocated for my subject, and I did a quick 'back of the envelope' against the time I am actually spending on it and its ridiculous. When I got large amounts of marking during term time I barely see my children. My husband has to take them away for the weekends ...so there is a little bit of disillusionment setting in. When you tackle them about it 'but why aren't you giving us adequate time to do this marking?' ... the time that is given is half of what it actually takes to mark the stuff properly ...the enjoyment of the teaching is outweighing the annoyance and disillusionment of certain other aspects. (Carol, N17)

Here, signs of 'first shock' (Williams 1999) arise connected to reality and workloads and these features start to reveal that feelings of excitement and enjoyment can, as a result, be turned towards disillusionment and frustration. For some, like Carol (N17), this occurred very early on in the transition cycle and for others it came about later. Regardless of the struggles experienced, teaching continued to provide enjoyment for the majority, and it was this aspect of work that, as stories showed, kept practitioners going as different challenges were encountered and dealt with. But the administration load was different, as Boden, Epstein and Kenway (2005:30) predicted and the findings highlighted, this activity was the main one to cause distress and frustration. A feature in this second phase that had strong, often negative, implications on practitioners, their personal life and energy as Carol's (N17) story highlighted earlier and most of the other practitioners also highlighted in the study.

Narratives reflected a working life that consisted of a variety of balancing acts due to the range of different responsibilities inside and outside of academic life, tasks that needed to be managed as part of the early transition phase. Practitioners were found to struggle at times with the range of different demands placed on their time and the need to satisfy these when they were not informed of what was needed in advance. The problem emerging was that if the enjoyment of teaching stopped, or became outweighed by factors causing disillusionment, practitioners would not remain because at this point of transition, newcomers were more likely to be able to return to professional practice than would be the case as time passed. The risk of early disillusionment and dissatisfaction brought associated implications not only for practitioners but the institutions, students and the wider academic community as applied expertise risked being lost and further recruitment costs incurred. The importance of getting transition right early on was evident but lacking was the right transition support systems and career management systems for new university academics from practice.

Practitioner stories showed this group were uncertain about the full extent of the academic workload specifically those tasks linked to administration. This level of activity was not something new entrants could have prepared for or known about beforehand

during the earlier *Finding* phase (Chapter 4). Practitioners arrived to teach but had not expected to be embroiled in the levels of administration encountered or the ways in which administration increased as part of their academic working life. Stories showed that this encounter influenced practitioners' views of the new role and their transitioning self.

I have now found myself in a job where I administrate! But that whole administration part, that management part, wasn't why I first went into education. If I think back to where I was twelve months ago and to now I thought do I really want that? Have I really come into teaching to be a teacher but also to be a manager as well? (Robert, N9)

Although an individual journey, the first twelve months in post and being part of academic life was shown to be a critical time. It was a time, as evident here through the narratives, that impacted the transitional journey. Here emotions highlighted by Briner (1999:327) through the work of Ortony, Clore, and Collins (1998) emerged through 'disappointment' but only with administration and 'distress' in terms of shock with the amount of administration workload involved. But this related to teaching only at this point. The administration had not yet led to 'disliking'. However, here 'inner contradictions' (Williams 1999) emerged and different degrees of 'uncertainty' (Williams 1999) appeared. Additionally, 'adjustments' (Nicholson 1990) were made and personal change evident as practitioners, who had been former senior personnel and the experts from the professional field required by higher education, found themselves having to engage with lesser level administrative tasks and roles. None transitioned to academic life expecting to go backwards to this level of work and as mentioned in Chapter 4, neither administration or management had been the drivers for their transition to higher education but this took up time during the 'middle' transition phase. A mismatch of perceptions and reality became evident leaving practitioners to deal with, and to come to terms with, the change and the 'emotional labor' (Kidd 1998:286) involved.

It was not unexpected to see the emergence of negative feelings from practitioner stories during the early-transition cycle, but it did show areas where institutions, and university

academics from practice, needed to be skilled to handle these situations. Having an awareness of this during the early transition phase provided the opportunity to identify where the more negative experiences needed attention, to be well-supported and for the negative aspects to be prevented, managed, or remedied.

Extra workloads featured in practitioner narratives of early transition especially add-ons outside of teaching or becoming a university academic:

There were additions that I didn't know about ... getting involved with student recruitment, the administrative aspects like recordings and other stuff. Meetings to attend. I didn't actually expect this here. I was thinking that you would come and teach, mark, and that you would have time to research and do other things. (Mike, N15)

The stories continued to show other additional duties such as module and programme leadership roles becoming part of the transition experience. These tasks were shown to take these university academics away from teaching activity, sharing their knowledge with others, and coaching the future workforce. This need to learn new things was welcomed, however it was evident that all the learning was connected to only one realm of academic life, the field of teaching:

I am still getting new 'add-ons'. I started being [Programme Manager] at quite short notice last year ... and things like the admissions [are new] (Elena, N4)

I have done a huge amount of supervision stuff and stuff that I have never done before ... I was module leader ... my experience was minimal really. (Olivia, N19)

New entrants were shown learning and doing what they considered best in an unfamiliar environment. The stories highlighted a need for the right kind of support, fitting systems for arrival and the benefit of a little 'slack in the systems' (Nicholson 1990), as mentioned earlier, to help with a transition to academic work and life. Also, help was required to know where to locate the required knowledge and advice rather than being left to find

this information for themselves through a process of self-discovery and investigation. It was clear that appropriate systems for knowledge transfer between academic generations, institutions and new university academics were needed to enable workloads to be understood, managed, and the transition process from practice to academic life well guided.

5.1.3 Limited Time and the 'Deep End'

Time featured in relation to the stories about arriving to working environments that were either busy, with little time to think or prepare, or during a time when these environments were quieter. Practitioners narratives showed these university academics contending with either of these extremes with, consequently, some newcomers having more time to prepare than others:

I got thrown in at the deep end. I was expecting to not start teaching until January on one module to ease me in. But when I joined, the week before, one of our members of staff actually had a really bad car accident and was in hospital for a long time. I ended up taking his [subject] module from my second week. It was great because I got to teach [the subject] but it was a very big shock to go from thinking I have got a few months to find my feet and plan what I am going to be doing, to do you mind teaching from Monday onwards? (Sarah, N20)

Some practitioners were thrown in at the 'deep end' due to unexpected circumstances but others had been thrust into teaching different topics because institutions did not fully understand what practitioners knew nor did they know the span that their expertise or knowledge reached across:

Then we got into the teaching it was just mayhem because, how do I describe it, they didn't really know what I knew so they just gave me things to teach and hoped that I'd be able to teach them. It was like throwing you in to the lion's den. (John, N1)

Early transition featured across all practitioner narratives as an experience that was summed up as being thrown in to the 'deep end', the 'lion's den' and 'cold water' during a time when practitioners needed help and had expected to arrive to receive institutional support and guidance. This continued to be particularly evident in relation to administration work, as Georgina (N16) highlighted:

I went for my first teaching session, and I was actually quite scared, nervous! I went in there and it was actually fine. Module leading was a different story altogether. I had all these questions, like what is module leading? I must admit I thought it was strange putting me into the cold water. I don't think that is fair.
(Georgina, N16)

Fixed timescales for making the transition through the phase of *Learning* were not found. Making the transition to academic work and life was individual and each practitioner faced the need to learn at their own speed, in their own time and as they discovered there was knowledge they needed to acquire. But it became noticeable that 'struggles' (Lucas 2006:57) were part of the experience of transition for these university academics, as noted in the earlier literature review. The problem here was that during the 'middle' phase of transition they were not aware of the 'specific forms' (Bourdieu 1993:72) that needed 'to be looked out for each time' (Bourdieu 1993:72) or that these forms spanned each realm of academic work. As such, learning and acquiring the knowledge needed without the right information or support had an impact of timescales and a precise timescale could not be found for transition.

From the stories it was evident that the settling in period did mean spending time in a 'neutral zone' (Bridges 1995:5) as sense was made and the passage through a personal learning curve also contended with. Learning was shown to occur through processes of self-discovery, inquiry and in the main with little formal guidance for making a speedy or efficient transition from a professional to an academic career. This was found to be problematic and risky from the early stages.

Unlike Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (1998:45) suggested earlier, the phases and features of the early transition process had not been found, from the practitioner narratives, to collapse into one. The point of 'stabilisation' (Nicholson 1990) did not begin to be started or reached during this middle phase either and, in fact, the contrary emerged from the stories. Making the transition through this second phase of *Learning* showed a time, and journey, that demanded a considerable investment time and energy, not only to survive, but to keep moving forwards within academia.

Practitioners stories showed newcomers became orientated to academic work and a new culture at the same time during the middle phase of *Learning*. Levels of preparedness for academic life were needed and tested out during this phase. This period, from the findings, showed to be one of high risk as practitioners underwent personal adjustments and learned to cope with the heavy teaching workloads. A large amount of time was ploughed into just one realm of academic work, teaching, and little investment made in other areas such as research, developing academic profiles and carving out academic futures. This highlighted potential risks for those practitioners who had transitioned in the hope of developing academic careers, John, Eleanor, Simon, Marie, Derek, Alex, Ellura, Bonnie, Sebastian, Nikkita, Hadrian, Carol, Daisy, Georgina, Sarah, and Mike when inside higher education.

5.1.4 Mismatched Expectations and Resulting Impact

All these types of new tasks did lead to new opportunities for learning different things which early on was motivating and exciting for all practitioners. Beyond this, the experience of transition during phase two did not stretch practitioners or help them get started in the other key areas of academic life or with their own personal professional development and the shaping of their academic career. Nor did it enable them to fully use their professional talents, knowledge, skills, and expertise which again was another identifiable risk during early transition. For example, as Sebastian (N13) pointed out:

'[Institutions] have intelligent people [from practice] who have actually got very solid work experience but they are never consulted on anything to do with the

world out there [or asked about their expertise from the professional field]. For example, I could have told them [how to solve a business problem] in five minutes at zero cost but they never asked. I never said. I think it is a bit silly that you employ such a wide variety of intelligent and experienced people in many respects ... with twenty years experience in the art but don't consult them. It is crazy but that is what happens, and it is hard to understand why they don't use [practitioners] for their own things when these lecturers work for them now.

It was evident from the stories that different practitioners had different types of expertise that transferred with them. For example, from corporate and business worlds that institutions could draw on and learn from but for some reason, which is not clear from these findings, this failed to occur or be recognised. The knowledge capital transfer between the professional field and the scientific field, as well as inside institutions, was not occurring as this study discovered. Practitioners might expect to be asked about something in their professional field especially as experts and consultants, but this failed to happen or be taken advantage of during the 'middle' phase of the transition experience. Practitioners stories showed they were utilised to teach and administrate only.

For some, all this impacted on expectations, the balance of work and opportunities for self-development across the spectrum of academic activity:

I was expecting more of a balance between my teaching and myself developing learning and researching. I hadn't expected it to be so administrative either. It's huge. Huge! I hadn't expected to photocopy as much as I was ... it just feels that I am not developing at a pace that I would like to do the job as well as I could. (Ellura, N7)

During this middle phase and through the 'adjustment' (Nicholson 1990), the reality of the time available for self, career or professional development became apparent and all the practitioner narratives reported little time for this professional activity. Findings showed that the amount of time required for discovering what was needed was underestimated but that this did become clearer the longer practitioners served inside

academic life. Often it involved seeing the first full academic calendar year through, a full teaching cycle, to become confident in knowing the exact requirements and what to expect next time round:

I suppose it was quite challenging time wise. Learning to do the technology as well ... you still have the teaching. So, the process itself is quite challenging especially if you don't know and you haven't gone through a whole module. Second time around you know that certain weeks you need to have this in order. (Ralph, N22)

The challenges described were connecting to the 'neutral zone' (Bridges 2009:5) as practitioners unplugged and plugged into academic life through teaching. However, the stories depicted that starting and settling in, as Ellura (N7) noted, meant practitioners were, to a certain degree, on a back foot catching-up:

The reality is that there is so much teaching demand and marking and student inquiries and all of that you are always on a back foot trying to catch up. (Ellura, N7)

The challenges of early transition from practice showed to involve getting to grips with everything that was needed of a new academic and from this understanding precisely what was important as well as developing a career within a very short space of time. Throughout the stories, a smooth transition continued to emerge as being hindered by a lack of information, fittingly designed support to aid a quick and successful transition to academic work and life, and the number of hours that were consumed by the role. Hours, as well as time, featured strongly as a recurring theme across all reports with the number of hours given up to academic working becoming an area that all practitioners reflected on. One where Bonnie (N11) provided a glimpse of academic life and balancing the hours that were available:

I mean it was a bit disappointing with the hours especially when I look back and think. I was given Module Leadership of a module. I was given a year tutor [role], and recruitment, and admissions for the department

on a 0.6 [contract]. That was a lot ... I did think working 0.6, three days, that's just not happened ever. It just really didn't happen ... the department wasn't big enough and I was the only person teaching on that module and that's when they scheduled all of the classes, all day Thursday. I was dead by the end of the Thursday ... I got more and more things to take on. Can you just do that? Can you just do this? Would you like to teach on this? Would you like to ... and I am thinking hang on! It was a bit of a rollercoaster, but I don't regret my decision to join a university. (Bonnie, N11)

During phase two, practitioners stories had shown that they did not really have a 'feel for the game' (Lucas 2006:57) inside academic life at this point. Individuals were seen giving hours, time, and energy to a range of tasks but not focusing on their own future pathways or career trajectories. Practitioners stories revealed they were at risk of not 'anticipating the future' (Lucas 2006:57), preparing or planning for this or carving out their own future career pathways beyond arrival. None regretted making the transition to an academic life overall, but *Learning* was shown to mean becoming increasingly aware of the hours individuals dedicated to academic work, teaching and administration, and the cost of this inside and outside of the academy as well as for themselves during this phase and longer-term.

5.1.5 Tipping Points and Coping Strategies

From the stories, 'first shocks' (Williams 1999) and 'provisional adjustment' (Williams 1999) continued to be evident. The desire and enjoyment from teaching kept practitioners going during reality checks, disappointments, stress, struggles, and as individuals became more conscious of the substantial investment they were giving. It was not a surprise to find practitioner narratives highlighting the toll this took on them personally to the point where individuals eventually reached the point where it became, or was felt to be, unsustainable. A place where stories revealed personal tipping points as the academic role overflowed into personal and/or family life bringing with it a more negative side to early transition:

... before the students arrived I was preparing, I was writing lectures and seminars ... it's really, really busy and I was teaching a huge amount of other modules. We were still very short staffed so very little free time. I was also doing the [teacher training] which I am still doing. It seemed to be non- stop. I used to get up early every morning, I was working every evening and weekends as well. I was working very, very hard ... longer hours and for less pay. I still enjoyed it much more than I did when I was in [practice] but my children don't. My children hate the fact that I work full-time because I was part-time in [practice] and they keep saying 'can you not be a [previous role identifier] again!' (Olivia, N19)

The strain on family life was not gender specific as Alex (N6) pointed out:

... with all of the hours we work, and my son, I haven't got hours to sit and read stuff ... the other problem is the expectations are when at university you work all evenings and every weekend and that's not sustainable either, not with a family. You have to be single. It's equal opportunities but that's the thing they sort of demand. It doesn't matter who you are if you've got family, if you've got a disability, if you've a social life, the demands are total. (Alex, N6)

Naturally problems occurred when workload continued to overspill into personal lives as the encounter, during early transition, helped newcomers start to understand academic life and cultures for themselves. This was not surprising given that these university academics from practice bring with them their own unique circumstances and came from pressured professions. Problems were found to arise for all when the investment of time failed to be a 'one-off' but was discovered to be a repeating situation through semesters and academic calendar years. The main issue appeared to be the vast amounts of hours consumed by the new role and outside lives shown to be taken over unexpectedly or without an end to giving in sight:

I was loving my job and terrified I was going to make a mistake or something was going to go wrong ... I think I didn't even see my husband for the first six months. I remember him complaining 'you are always busy!' and I am 'but I need to get it right'. Then obviously, the second semester was the same because I had different subjects so it was going on for a whole year where I just didn't know what I was doing. I was just trying to cope. (Nikita, N21)

Nonetheless, throughout the findings it could be seen that most new university lecturers from the professional fields were dedicated to what they did: teaching, sharing knowledge and educating others. However, during phase two practitioner stories highlighted a need to invoke personal coping 'strategies and remedies' (Nicholson 1990). This resulted as individuals realised for themselves that they were being pushed by the demands of the job, agendas of others, and beyond their own personal limits. This impacted on each of them at different times and in different ways whilst *Learning*. For this group of university academics, this did not deter them from continuing with academic work or life, or show them returning to practice, but it did bring about change. Change came through different mind-sets, personal ground rules, and boundaries for continuing with engagement in this field as Bonnie (N11) highlighted when reality was put into perspective:

As much as I love what I do, and I do love what I do, one of my colleagues was taken ill and it puts things in perspective for you. I think by enjoying it so much you can get carried away with it. You lose perspective on the other things that are important in life ... she could have died in her forties with three children. I am in the same position [and] that makes you think actually 'it's just a job'. I love it and I don't want it to go away but at the end of the day this is not my life. This is not the be all and end all and there are other more important things - my family. That really did make me strong in here ... I just won't put up with rubbish the same as I used to take it. (Bonnie, N11)

Bonnie (N11) in realising boundaries needed to be established reached the point where she was no longer prepared to continue as she had been, to be put on, to accept or put up with overwork. Like some of the others, she felt she was being taken advantage of because she could do the job and different jobs. But when the experience of transition led her to identify that her helpful nature was being taken advantage of, to the detriment of her time, family, career, and wellbeing she realised she needed to act, to change. Findings showed that all practitioners during the phase of *Learning* reached this realisation and threshold.

All practitioners stories showed changes and elements of rebalancing during phase two. None of the transition cycles reviewed in Chapter 2 had considered the impact that the unexpected had on individuals making a transition to academic work and life which here has contributed to knowledge and to understanding the transition experience. There were aspects in this middle phase that were not necessary 'first shocks' (Williams 1999) but that were 'shocks' about the unexpected nonetheless which other prior transition cycle models had not reflected or included. For some, the experience involved taking stock generally, others refocused life when reaching low ebbs or when it was identified that change was necessary for survival.

After my first term I was just exhausted. I was physically exhausted. For the first time ever in my life I got bronchitis. It got to the day after term finished and I said I am having two weeks Christmas break. Literally the day I woke up I had this bronchitis and I thought 'no!'. This was the two weeks that I had counted on to have time outside of teaching to do all the life stuff I had wanted to and the preparation for the next [year]. (Robert, N9)

From the findings it was evident that all practitioners put in hard work, effort and showed commitment to providing a good quality higher education for their students. The reports confirmed academic life was, as Grant and Sherrington (2006:10) claimed, 'demanding in terms of time and effort'. If left unchecked, practitioner stories showed the experience of transition could risk turning into other issues that would affect practitioners personally

and their wellbeing. For most practitioners, individuals could be seen developing their own 'strategies and remedies' (Nicholson 1990; Blaxter, Hughes and Tight 1998) to deal with events drawing on the lessons learned. They put in place 'safety' (Nicholson 1990) measures but as findings here added they did more by weighing-up the move, taking stock of whole situation, changing, setting personal boundaries, establishing limitations, and identifying when (and what to) say 'no' to and where to offer mutual help and assistance. But it remained the case that practitioners received little support for their transition even when preventable tipping points were reached.

5.1.6 Support Makes a Difference

The lack of a formalised system specifically designed to support early transition appeared part of the issue and, without this, as practitioners became aware of the difficult situations and questions to ask they turned for assistance to different people both inside and outside of the organisation, but particularly colleagues inside academic life.

Colleagues [helped] above all else ... I could not have done it without the help from them generally but one in particular. It has made such a difference not just in terms of the teaching element but just settling in generally ... you get another email saying that X and Y are needed before the end of the week, and I am 'right what am I meant to do?'.
Colleagues have been brilliant so that helped massively. (Carol, N17)

Practitioner stories showed others drawing upon support from a joint network which combined people inside and outside of the field of higher education:

I had one person who was outside of the teaching experience and I had one person who was teaching here but we weren't teaching in the same modules. They were invaluable. (Robert, N9)

Throughout the stories, it was striking to find few practitioners mentioned actual support forthcoming from line managers. But on the few occasions where this existed it helped the transition process. *Learning*, especially when academic managers acted as mentors,

provided coaching, or actively passed on the knowledge needed for a successful transition to academic life to newcomers:

I was lucky because my office, ... was next to [identifier] who was a Principal Lecturer and an Associate Head ... she wasn't officially my mentor, but I worked very closely with her because she was a first-year tutor at that point. She was excellent in helping me to settle in and sort things out ... it's nice to have a colleague who you can immediately team up with ... I settled in quite quickly with her help. (Alex, N6)

Only one other professional practitioner mentioned having a mentor assigned and that person was a senior manager. All the others missed out on this coaching, mentoring, socialisation, and learning opportunity during the critical early years of academic work. Training for the role and for academic life omitted other key elements of academic work, particularly research, academic career management, and identity formation during phase two. Part of the training provided by all institutions focused on teaching qualifications (PgCAP) and all but one practitioner here received this assistance during on-boarding. Learning occurred mainly through discovery or when new entrants received informal help from academic colleagues.

The benefits gained from teaching qualifications were identified from practitioner stories as the chance to network, to share ideas, reflect on careers and the provision of direction on locating relevant reading material and textbooks.

[teacher training] has been so helpful because it has made me do some reading about what makes a good teacher. It also helps me to reflect on the things that I have done so far, and I think in this career, more than the one before, the way to improve is to just keep reflecting ... that is something that I am going to be doing every day for the rest of my life here at a university. (Sarah, N20)

The overall picture seemed to be that institutions might be relying on, or expecting, PgCAP programmes to fill in the knowledge and skills gaps but from the findings this was

not evident outside of building more confidence with teaching practice in higher education. As was evident, and as I know from my own academic practice when leading a PgCert, it can take one to two years for new lecturers to complete this qualification. Also, not all PgCerts cover the same topics or materials and none studying on the PgCerts here mentioned being introduced, or developed, in the other realms of academic practice, assisted to managed academic careers or identity changes. These programmes of study dealt with teaching not with research, academic life or academic career management leaving new university academics only partly trained after a long time (two years) which emerged as a risk during the transition experience.

The passage through learning curves, as well as the transition cycle, as found here was unnecessarily elongated. Valuable time was lost as stories revealed. Time that could never be regained. As Walker (2007:6) claimed, learning continued throughout a professional career but here this was not necessarily focused on the right direction or at the required speed for practitioners. Systems for on-boarding (CIPD 2020), a term used in the professional field to mean more than an induction process, includes a welcoming to a workplace or professional community. A process that in the context of academic life should involve newcomers being orientated and socialised within academic life, their discipline, and in institutional requirements as academic staff who are employees. But this was missing from the stories. Instead, findings here showed that on-boarding processes during the initial transition period had not been designed for practitioners. Components supporting academic career development were also missing from the story. The limited support provided aligned to the more traditional ways applicable to the research route that now did not fit the needs of a diverse academic workforce arriving from practice.

Practitioners who had recently been students or who had worked on a temporary basis inside higher education, had the advantage of some insider knowledge. Possessing basic information about the different operating systems helped along with the 'social supports', experience of the 'real work to do', and 'advance contacts' as Nicholson (1990) noted earlier were useful:

Having known the systems before I started was a massive advantage. I think that if the institution was going to do anything to assist those professionals coming in it would be teach them the systems. Teach them the way it works really early on because it does make life so much easier ... if you understand the confines and the constrictions under which you are working. (Bonnie, N11)

Through the stories, having the right information, training, and mentoring repeatedly showed to assist these academics from practice make sense of a new work environment, being part of a community and to 'join the dots'. This is not a surprise but clearly a heavy reliance appeared placed on what worked in the past for new academic staff without any real tailoring of induction, orientation, career, or professional development systems to meet the needs of other new academics, those from the professional fields. The knowledge and information required existed and was already known about suggesting that it was available and as such relatively straightforward to collect, be given to and translated for use by this new group. Particularly in relation to research work, academic life, culture, identity, and managing an academic career or trajectory.

For one practitioner, who was an international lecturer starting an academic career in the UK, her account showed the value of receiving full support in terms of a useful induction, to help to understand what was required early-on at the point of arrival:

What helped is when you really have all the full support and training and you are clear, this is the system, you are supposed to do this. Then all of a sudden the dots are connected and everything starts to make sense. That really helped a lot. (Daisy, N12)

Across all practitioner narratives, only one institution was shown to have in place early on-boarding, induction and training systems that enabled those few academics from practice to formally receive the help they needed from arrival in relation to lecturing only. Although this support for transition focused on getting started with teaching, the immediate task, it was considered beneficial and it became evident that a full support and on-boarding programme, capable of dealing well with career transitions regardless

of the inward route, were required across all institutions. Without this, or when support was not fitting, new academics from practice began to form their own opinions as to why this was not happening, to reflect, and form new perceptions:

When I look back ... I am thinking was I just being tested to see if I could sink or swim really ... [to] see how far they could push. Fortunately, I didn't sink ... and actually it was nice to feel that they were prepared to challenge me and take the risk that I might sink but that they really didn't think I would. I don't think they would have thrown quite so much at me had they not thought that I could have handled it?
(Bonnie, N11)

Whether rightly or wrongly, the forming of new opinions and trying to understand the new world of work continued to run as a theme through this second phase of the early-transition cycle, which is as one might expect, when learning and doing a new role. Practitioners used what they thought and sense-making once inside academic life to take comfort and encouragement from:

It was sharing the work with colleagues which actually made me feel more part of an academic community than teaching the subject or preparing for the subject itself. It was the working with others when you get the sense, that like them, you are part of the academic community too. (Hadrian, N21)

I was a good communicator and could manage projects and people but I don't think I felt that gave me anything of an incline, or any kind of preparation for life in an academic community, so I took confidence from the fact that I did know my subject and that came through in my teaching. (Marie, N5)

It felt good that I was trusted to get on and do the job I was being paid to do, I took encouragement and motivation from that. (John, N1)

Whilst there was little support, rather than moaning, I decided that the quicker I learn how to do it the better. Then I can get on with it. ... after all, it is not like just taking on a new job you are taking on a new profession. (Simon, N2)

In summary, the story of settling in brings to our attention the challenges, struggles, and lack of adequate, and fitting, on-boarding or career development systems designed to support the early-transition process for new entrants arriving from a different entry route to that of research. For practitioners settling in, *Learning* involved being engaged in an evolving process of transition, moving through stages of 'provisional adjustments' (Williams 1999), different emotional states as they learned and became conscious of different aspects of the role. It was during this 'middle' phase that individuals were tested and tipping points found that needed dealing with. This was done by establishing personal strategies for handling situations and used to make sense of the different encounters. However, most of what was found to create negative feelings or experiences was preventable. Systems needed to move away from a 'one size fits all' approach to one where institutions understand the diverse nature, specific needs, and requirements of the academic workforce they engage. Then to supply the knowledge and information required by various subgroups through the mediums that worked for those academics.

During this phase, the reality of being a university academic began to hit home. Little space was left for the other areas of academic work or for carving out academic careers and futures. Practitioners were found mainly 'doing' but not necessarily 'thinking' about themselves or developing themselves career-wise as part of an academic community. This was not surprising given the workloads and levels of guidance and support. In this second phase the early-transition cycle was shown to be costly, risky, emotional, and requiring resilience. Additionally, determination was required if newcomers from practice were to succeed and survive.

During this phase, practitioners continued to stay in academic life making necessary adjustments but different to those highlighted by Williams (1999) and Nicholson (1984). All came to view higher education differently once inside academic life and when learning how different this workplace, and culture, was to what these newcomers envisioned on the outside whilst in professional life. Even though not all practitioners had come from the private sector, Simon's (N2) comment aptly summed up practitioners stories:

University life and the university as an animal is completely different to the private sector, it couldn't be any more different. That is not to say that it is bad but there are certainly things you get used to that don't necessarily happen elsewhere.

In professional life and field, the ways of working, the support mechanisms, the expectations, the respect, the culture, support, and the speed at which changes are made are different to academic life. It is a different way of being and a different way of operating. The next section presents the differences found in the environment and the shocks that practitioners reported experiencing during this second phase of transition.

5.2 Environment and Shock

Practitioner narratives highlighted that a feature of the Early Transition Cycle (ETC) was the new environment that new entrants passed through and the culture shocks that this experience brought in relation to what academics from practice had previously been accustomed to. Particularly those found when working in an environment that was new to them as a lecturer and the different shocks individuals found as phase two, *Learning* unfolded. Through these stories, practitioners shared experiences of their expectations and remembering their former working lives. Here comparisons between the old and new worlds of work specifically in relation to freedom, trust, authority, and workplaces became evident opening aspects of transition to be further developed in future. Most professional practitioners here entered the field of higher education from senior posts and as such were used to working with certain degrees of freedom, running, and leading teams, having the power and authority to make decisions, performance measures and connections in the professional field. Here stories help us appreciate and understand practitioner perspectives relating to views of teamwork, practices, realities, and the culture shocks.

5.2.1 Culture Shocks and Clashes

Most participants reported that shocks, and in particular a different working culture or cultural shock, was encountered as they entered an unfamiliar environment and as

practitioners undertook areas of activity that they could not have fully prepared for in advance of arrival. From the stories, practitioners arrived expecting that some basic information would be given to them from the start because in professional life this was taken for granted as part of that field and practice. But here the expectations relating to what they thought the new workplace would be like and deliver became clearer which Derek (N3), and most others, drawing a comparison to previous situations in professional life:

I was expecting tangibles. I did ask [line manager] on the first day where do I pick up my blackberry and my laptop from. He said you don't get one ... but everyone is using a phone? They are their own. The day I went into management at [previous organisation] I walked into the office. The office had been decorated, there was a mobile phone, an IBM think pad and the keys to my car waiting on the desk! If you had seen my first office you'd have thought I'd won the lottery. I had my own garden. French windows on to a drought garden. It was beautiful! [Here] I did expect to get a phone and a laptop. I was amazed when I arrived that I was given a second-hand computer that didn't work ... and it took me a day to get my pass. (Derek, N3)

Here the culture shock was that academic staff were being expected to use their own mobile phone and equipment because this had not been provided for by the employer, the institution. Also, the sense of the professional 'blue chip' environment that Derek (N3) worked in was painted in that he had a nice office, a view, a flower garden that was designed to manage water well and a decorated office of his own. He did not share an office. This reminded me of my own experience of working in the banking and financial services industries where premises were invested in and where climbing the career ladder meant that another set of benefits, type of office or 'floor' to work on was provided. Like Derek (N3) the working environment that I had come from was good, conducive to work and matched the position attained. It was professional in every sense, clean, state of the art, and decorated to create different spaces for working as a team or on your own. It was a very different world and working environment to further and higher

education workplaces as this story prompted me to recall as part of the evolving transitional experience.

Not all practitioners had the same experience as Derek (N3), or I, in professional life because some worked for different organisations such as medical wards, law, different offices, factory offices or floors, internationally, law firms or at home (or on the road) as a consultant. But they did all come from working environments that equipped them with the resources needed to undertake the role they were engaged to do. It was evident from the stories that the professional life that academics experienced prior to academic life was quite different and this required a huge adjustment on the part of many respondents because transition meant moving to offices, classrooms, lecture theatres and workspaces in higher education that were different to the past. Most through their stories told of previous organisations and sectors that were dynamic, hard pressured and where these individuals were considered senior personnel which equated also to different 'perks' of the job relevant to the sector.

Practitioners stories depicted them as a group used to holding senior positions that endowed them with certain privilege, and rewards, that higher education could not, and would not, be able to match. Particularly so based on their entry level as lecturers, and their place within the academic hierarchy, associated with teaching. This is an aspect of transition that I found interesting and one to develop further in future. Practitioners stories showed that they were not working at lower levels in their previous organisations and for most their employment (and reward packages) showed this, which I related to. For the majority, the new role did not hold the same level of power and responsibility that they were previously accustomed to:

My job before I came here meant I had seven or eight projects on the go worth up to half a million pounds each and they were mine. I lived and died by how those projects went. I was in charge of them. I called the shots. I said what happened when. Then you come into this post where all of a sudden you are learning the profession. You are not the master of it. You have almost got to put your ego to one side that you

have had as a practitioner, and say well I have got to eat a little bit of humble pie here because I don't actually know how to do half of these things that I am supposed to be doing on a daily basis. That can be quite difficult. (Simon, N2)

This story, albeit different circumstances and organisations, was similar for most other professional practitioners. Most had been used to running different projects, large budgets, teams of people, being held responsible for their own performance and the performance of others (or the company), having the authority that goes with the position and being the expert (the master of what they did). However, the transition cycles reviewed in Chapter 2 had not indicated that a loss of 'ego' or 'eating of humble pie' might feature within the transition process. But, for seven practitioners, and depending upon the prior roles they held outside of academic life experiencing a 'loss', as Simon (N2) indicated, was part of the early experience of transition.

Practitioners arrived in this new environment with different personalities, professional identities, standing, prior experiences, ways of working, ways of being, personal stances and ways of doing things as would be expected. But in common they were all were opened to a new world of work. Individuals came across as strong and confident characters, aware that they were operating in a different situation even if they did not fully understand academic life during the early-transition phase of *Learning*. As Elena (N4) highlighted, and as others alluded to as being a feature of professional life:

[I was] very able, and used to, standing my ground and arguing with people about [things], in a good way. I would describe myself as quietly assertive, not aggressive, not in people's faces but able to win a lot of arguments based on resources and safety and things like that.

Although all practitioners were not from the health profession, most did note a difference in the way professionals were treated inside academic life in comparison to being outside of this, in professional life, when carrying out the 'day job' and being associated with an organisation. Here the organisation was considered as the 'the university' and a way that practitioners were viewed as being part of the institution:

To then come in to somewhere where actually sometimes you are seen as 'the university' ... I had been used to people thanking me for saving lives! [It is] very different, very different and the politics. (Elena, N4)

None of the practitioners through their narratives mentioned being praised or acknowledged for their contributions, the work they were carrying out or the information they were transferring by the institution, line managers or others. None of the practitioners mentioned receiving words of appreciation from the university as they passed through the *Learning* phase of transition. The politics within higher education environments, institutions, disciplines, and communities was something else that these newcomers touched upon in different ways through their stories and something they had to learn about and personally adjust to. Although identified as an issue here, the culture and politics of the new work environment is outside the scope of this study. Future research could take forward an exploration into the differences between the workplaces of professional life and academic life so that these cultures and political differences can be further understood as part of the experience of transition.

Here the 'first shocks' were not always shown as Williams (1999) described because practitioner stories did not feature 'numbness' or 'disbelief' nor had the transition to academic life been forced or result from a 'trauma or loss' because professional practitioners made the decision to move to academic life from professional life. It was their choice but the change, and culture shock, was more apparent for some than for others. This discovery resembled more the 'pitfalls/problems' claimed by Nicholson (1990) as shock generally. Here a hint of 'adjustment' appeared as the need for personal change as well as building new relationships or ways of being became part of the evolving transitional experience.

5.2.2 Professional Freedom and Trust

Freedom featured as practitioners came to terms with the amount they had in academic life in comparison to what they were used to in professional life. For most practitioners the way academic life worked in terms of hours, and the amount of freedom, or the ways in which they could work was received positively and found to make a positive difference

to levels of motivation. Personal adjustments could be seen through leaving behind any ideas linked to 'nine-to-five' or office work, shift-working, and other working cultures to adopting another way of organising working days. New ways that meant being part of an academic community and getting used to how academic work operates and is structured:

Summer is a strange time isn't it as an academic? It's really strange because people are going home and doing their marking and I am like where is everyone? Why is no-one in the office? They are marking and it's going to be like this for the rest of the summer. It's so bizarre. I am enjoying it, don't get me wrong, but I am still very much in the 9-5 mind-set. Today in fact I feel guilty because I am here, at home now, and then I am going to go over and invigilate an exam. Then I am going to go home because I worked until 9.00 pm last night teaching. I feel guilty! ... it's brilliant as soon as I snap out of that 9-5 mentality. (Sarah, N20)

The ways academic communities operate in relation to working hours and being present featured as a shock to some practitioners for differing reasons only because they had not been used to this in their former professional life:

We were supposed to move [offices] in the summer, then told it wasn't going to be until after our August holiday. The realisation that actually I don't need to be there all of the time ... we could either work from home or we could work offsite. When you come from professional practice, or even from my time of working in FE, you were there at 9.00 o'clock in the morning, well 8.30 am in the morning, and you left at 5.00 pm in the evening or when your evening lectures had finished. To suddenly come to HE where you were left to your own devices, to come and go as you please ... I suppose you felt respected that they were not challenging you, where you were all day long, and why you were not in the office. ... It made me feel good that I was actually trusted to get on and do the job I was paid to do. (John, N1)

Autonomy and being trusted to do the work and having the freedom to do this was an important feature attached to the positive events relating to early transition by all participants. The relevance of trust featured in other ways and identified as a boost to confidence.

When I had been working in my profession previously, I had gone part-time because I had had children, and suddenly I felt I was treated like a second-class citizen with no brain. Couldn't give me any responsibility ... couldn't possibly let me handle this because it was too big. I am only there three days a week so what do I know ... for a long period there I felt undervalued, underutilised and I was bored. *Really* bored. In this role, it was nice to feel that somebody trusted me enough to allow me to just do these things and go with it. Although it was a bit scary at times it was a real confidence boost ... and I just *loved it!* (Bonnie, N11)

Here a 'new confidence, transformation' (Williams 1999) started to surface as finding trust developed practitioners confidence and increased motivational levels. This did not occur at the end of the transition cycle as Williams (1999) suggested but found much earlier in the transition cycle. However, this experience of trust was not the same for all practitioners and narratives showed that different levels of trust were identified related to different circumstances. John (N1) had shown trust to mean being able to work in different places not necessarily on campus, and being trusted to do so, Bonnie (N11) related trust to being able to do things that she had previously been restricted from doing but, on the other hand, as Sarah (N20) reports, feelings at times changed when treated like a 'junior' based on what peers indicated could and could not be done:

I have never been in trouble for sending out something but there have been a few instances where someone has said you know 'you shouldn't have sent that out'. It's very sort of no you can't do this. It's almost like well it is like 'teacher-student' you can't do this whereas before my motto always, which I used to say to my junior members of staff, was always think what is the worst that can happen if you do this, or if you

send this out. If it is minor do it, take the leap ... but here it is not like that at all. That does hinder. It's quite bizarre. I find that quite difficult.

(Sarah, N20)

Here, the sense that some practitioners had was they had moved from being senior people able to make basic administration decisions, or empower others to do so, to a place where this was no longer possible, to being junior or lower down. This was a new way or type of culture because all these academics from practice had held senior posts in organisations prior to lecturing roles and did not consider themselves to be 'juniors' either as administrators or in teaching the subjects they knew about. It was evident that mixed messages were being sent to them by different people, the institution needed them because they were experts but when in the discipline they risked being viewed by peers as juniors which could result in shock as well as tensions. As the narratives showed, academics from practice were previously used to roles of responsibility and trust, and for most, when viewed as a 'junior' it was not expected:

I don't have as much freedom as I thought I was going to have ... it's not that simple because if you have a whole department that has got masses of students coming in and there are teachers needed then actually you are allocated your hours. I have never been able to negotiate what I will do or what I won't do I am *told* what I will teach, I am *told* what I will programme manage ... I am told 410 hours is my allocation (part-time) and I have already been allocated 389 hours for teaching. I have got 40 hours for [research]. I have already spent 9 of them and I know that I am allocated for another 3 lots of teaching ... where is the time to research and be, and do all of the other things that I am supposed to do? Then there are Boards and all the admin. (Ellura, N7)

Most practitioners found they were 'told' or given their allocated teaching load without consultation. It appeared that different levels of 'freedom' were part of the transition experience and that there was a difference between the two types of freedom. One was

found to relate to the amount of control practitioners had over their time and workload and the other related to the institutional level at which they were able to make decisions. From a few practitioner stories it was evident that credibility, in the sense of being trusted to do the job, did not exist or at least to the levels that practitioners had been used to when in professional life.

On the other hand, a 'first shock' (Williams 1999) arose from practitioners realising the actual amount of authority they did have in the new role and especially with their students:

I think one of the things that surprised me was the amount of authority that I actually had in the classroom. In my old life you really had to work hard at being credible and you really had to set the scene as to why someone should trust you ... I thought I had to build that level of trust in terms of my expertise here. But because I was designated the teacher I was perceived to be the point of authority. Yet my experience as a postgraduate student was we should be exploring, we should be debating, we should be making sense of ourselves and that the lecturer was there to guide that kind of thinking process. With me being new to teaching, and the students being new to being a student, they looked at me and said 'Well [Robert] you tell us?' (Robert, N9)

Practitioners, as experts, were trusted to lead a community of learners and to design, deliver and facilitate the learning of future professionals through their teaching practice which did provide levels of 'authority' and an aspect of the role that was enjoyed.

5.2.3 Team Working to Individual Collaboration

Throughout, as practitioners told the story of their experience, each of them was found to look back and make comparison with their profession and the life they moved from. This was apparent especially in relation to teamwork and the value attached to it. Some had substantial experience of leading teams, and all had worked as part of a team in one way or another prior to arrival. It was here that 'adjustments' (Nicholson 1990) and 'inner contradictions' (Williams 1999) emerged as a feature of phase two.

As practitioners became conscious that they were no longer part of a team, as they understood it to be, it meant recognising they were now working in a community where individual collaboration appeared to replace team working. This needed to be understood by newcomers early-on and the collegiate nature and collaborative culture of academic life and work explained to them but as the stories showed this was missing from the transition experience and from the process of becoming a university academic from practice. Previously, in professional life, being part of a professional team meant people working together to achieve a common goal or a cause that needed to be resolved with people having a stake in this by being part of an overall shared commitment to making things happen for the organisation, team, project, customer, patient, client or for continuous improvement purposes.

Academic life was about individuals and individuals coming together and this realisation presented a 'culture shock' (Becher and Trowler 2001:23). The 'taken-for-granted' ways from the past turned into new ways of behaving in the new environment of academic life and working:

It's a team but not a team. It's almost like a virtual team. Although I have a very strong sense of team now, it took a very long time to arrive at that. At the beginning it was just adjusting to this very new culture. A very new different way of working. Very different to hard practice where you literally have to be a team. I see academics as working individually more so and that was something very new and different. It was adjustment ... I was always mixed with enjoying the teaching, but slightly missing my old culture, but still trying to get used to this new culture – a new way of being. (Ellura, N7)

For most practitioners the lack of teamwork, as they knew it, came not only as an initial shock but it brought disappointment during the time of adjustment.

I think more than anything else is the negative impression, the lack of teamwork. The lack of commitment to an overall goal. The fact that in business you have got to create a mutually supporting team and my

dictum is what happens at 2 o'clock in the morning? If there is a problem at the company at 2 o'clock in the morning does everybody get up and put their shoulders to the wheel? On the other hand, if an employee is in trouble at 2 o'clock in the morning what will the company do for them? Will you pull the stops out for them? I don't have that feeling in any of the academic institutions. I think that in general there is not any one unifying goal or objective. There is probably some motherhood statement about the fact that delivering education or delivering enlightenment or whatever the case may be. But that is too broad and too general. A lot of people tend to be prima donnas as well. They are pushing their own objectives and their own interests. It can be quite noticeable in some of the [international] universities where you get people who have become sort of world celebrities in relation to certain areas. What I do find rather distasteful, in those cases, is that they fund their own writing and fund their own careers on the basis of an almost nominal association with the university. (Leonard, N14)

The stories relating to teams and team working brought out practitioners expectations and values, and from this emerged a realisation of the individual nature of academic work even though the new entrants were part of an established community of academics they were individuals within a group rather than a member of a team like they had been in the professional field. When practitioners became conscious of the extent to which they were an individual, and no longer part of a team, a shift in thinking and perspectives about this new environment became evident.

The disappointing thing is it is not teamwork. It is you and your own academic identity. You have to be ruthless about it. They are so you have to be. I know a lot of my colleagues they are quite self-centred because they have to be. I have to be now. I have to spend my [time] doing my stuff for me. My colleague who wants to write a paper with me, I have to be ruthless, and say look if it doesn't fit in with what I

need you can't. It would be nice to collaborate with others. I knew from the outset it was very much like this, you have to be an individual.

(Alex, N6)

Practitioners at this stage were not looking to a research career but instead from most of the stories were trying to work out how they could do all of the areas of academic work, a combination of teaching and research. Even though the narratives showed that team working did not exist in the same way as it was understood in professional life, from the stories practitioners did find an element of comfort in being part of a collegiate community when group decisions were required or where collaborative agreements needed to be reached:

I found that, this idea of this collegiate collaborative group sometimes exasperating, sometimes warm and snuggly ... but a lot of the time comforting because then you felt the decision you had reached wasn't yours and yours alone. (Derek, N3)

Here, Derek (N3) had provided an example related to teaching practice where a Board decision was required regarding the grading, passing, and progression of students on a programme. The comfort taken was that the decision was not made alone, that it was peer reviewed, externally verified and award decision granted by a community rather than an individual. Other stories highlighted the collegiate nature of academic work as being a positive experience during transition. This meant that newcomers, at times, had a degree of comfort in not being entirely alone when a key decision needed to be made in relation to teaching practice or administration. In this regard, the early experience of transition brought a range of different people, skills, experience, and expertise together which was part of the excitement featured and a part of *Learning* that required personal adjustments within the new working environment as academic working and cultures became known and understood.

The added benefit of being part of a wider community was that this also consisted of students as well as academic peers from all around the world. This brought practitioners

into encounters with many different people and an exposure to something that was culturally different and interesting to be part of:

All the time you meet different people and for me the exciting part is that I always teach a lot of international students ... of course it is different from back in [my home country] where you get all people from the same background. You don't have this but when you come here [this university] I have students from different countries ... quite challenging for the lecturer in a way but it is interesting at the same time (Daisy, N11)

Part of the experience of transition involved not only a culture change but understanding other cultures as part of the process an aspect other transition models had not identified.

5.2.4 Slower Pace and Decision-Making

In addition to the features that showed areas of disappointment, the pace at which things operated in higher education institutions surfaced as an area of frustration in addition to administration. From practitioner stories, this seemed to relate to a cultural shift because practitioners narratives showed that they had often moved from a fast-paced environment to academic life where communities working together did so at a slower pace, and where decision-making took a lot longer than practitioners had been used to externally.

I had to realise that things operated much slower and that there was a lot more waste. I noticed that there was a lot of doing things several times. There was a lot of correcting mistakes and doing things manually. An awful lot of form filling for what appeared to be no particular reason. I did notice that I had to slow it down and accept that the imperative just wasn't there for a lot of things. Two-hour meetings where the outcome was to have another meeting shocked. (Derek, N3)

The stories touched on changes to situations highlighting some of the struggles and frustrations encountered by practitioners which for some newcomers added to shock and required adjustment:

I have found here people are set in their ways and there have been times where as a group we have been discussing things that we could try ... and someone else who has been there for a long time said 'no that wouldn't work', 'no that's not happening' and that does hinder things. We should be being creative and thinking of new ways to challenge our students. (Sarah, N20)

Practitioner stories showed that changing practice or procedures was different in professional life to that being experienced now within higher education. An example of this is provided by Sarah (N20):

I do find that here [higher education] it is not always as open to suggestions as where I was before [industry]. I find that quite surprising ... I mean [industry] has got much more at stake if we wind up a client or if something goes wrong ... [but] I was always encouraged to be, to do my own thing, with support but to roll with it. Here it is not quite like that.

The stories to this point had not revealed a complete 'letting go' of the past or memories for all practitioners during phase two of *Learning* highlighting that this phase of transition may not be possible, desired, or quick for an accomplished group of academics from practice. Additionally, as practitioners unplug individuals do not leave everything behind and prior transition cycle models had not taken this into account as this study shows. However, as Bridges (2009) claimed 'ending, losing, letting go' appeared to start for some during early transition triggered by events or memorable moments found inside academic life.

It was that exam board, that was a real moment when I thought 'OK, well you have really left your world behind'. It was because [the old life] was so cut and thrust, and exciting, and very onerous, and very

stressful, I don't want to romanticise it. I left it for a reason ... then sitting in that exam board going name, after name, after name, I thought 'OK. This is really different from practice'. That was a real moment of 'you've left that world behind now, this is what exam boards are, you'll never experience another [industry] meeting' ... I am here now. It's different. (Ellura, N7)

Most practitioners, as evident from their stories, found that the academic meetings were different to meetings in professional life especially the length of time they took to complete, the lengthy discussions, reflections, and the at the end decisions were not always reached. In practice, the purpose of meetings was to decide on a course of action during that allocated time or to come out with a creative solution, so this change of culture was found to frustrate.

In summary, the changes needed to practice and coming to terms not only with a new role, but the workings of an academic community joined in serving higher education emerged here, through the 'middle' phase of Learning. It was clear that 'first shocks' (Williams 1999) and 'shock' (Nicholson 1990) more generally required practitioners to make decisions, to establish strategies, identify remedies, and to set boundaries for themselves (and their practice) as part of early transition to the academic workplace. The findings here made it clearer that the transition process lacked efficient methods of knowledge transfer and adequate systems designed specifically to fit, and support, these new university academics from practice during the evolving transitional experience. To make a successful transition and evolve into the fullness of academic life from practice these were needed. With this insight comes the opportunity to remedy and improve the conventional systems linked to transition, and the evolving transitional process, as new understanding is added here, and a deeper appreciation gained of this sub-group of the academic community.

From the lessons learned by practitioners during this phase their stories had shown them coming to terms with the realities of academic life and work, of the need to be an individual within an established community that worked collaboratively, and the need to

adopt personal strategies to cope and survive during the early-transition phase. Phase two, *Learning*, was not the end because learning and discovery continued to be part of the academic role and what motivated practitioners to continue their transition.

5.3. Visualising Phase Two - Learning

From the stories and findings, it was possible to create a conceptualisation of the experience of transition during this ‘middle’ phase. Here this section presents this as a visualisation of the second phase of the transitional journey continuing to draw on Williams (1999) ‘transition cycle’ and the combined theoretical lens to make comparison to prior models and build on from the framework provided. This follows on from the visualisation of phase one, *Finding*, as presented in Chapter 4.

Phase two, *Learning*, emerged after entry to academic life was made. It was the period when practitioners had already accepted the job role, were encountering the new work environment and in the process of leaving professional life behind, either fully or partially, Fig. 20.

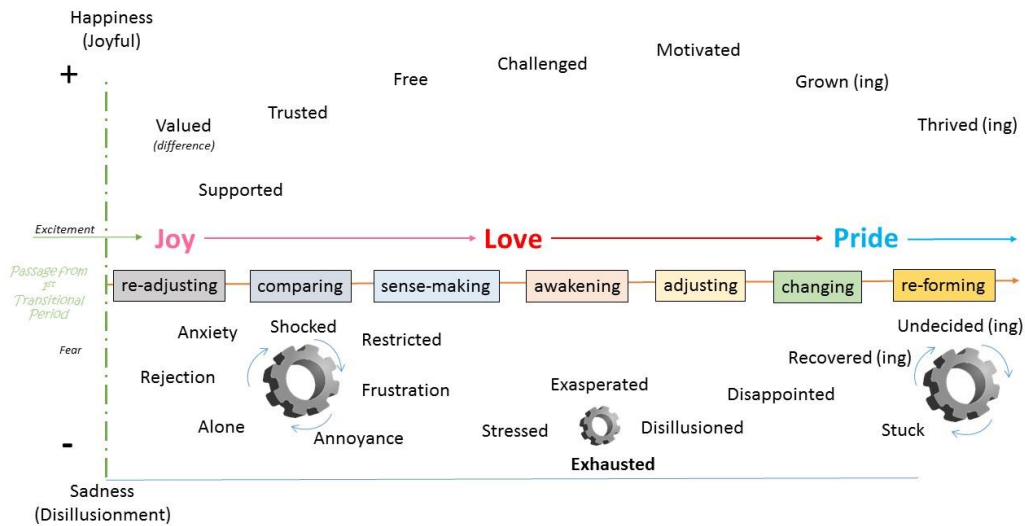


Figure 20. Early-Transition Cycle – Phase Two (*Learning*)

This ‘middle’ phase was one that Williams (1999) and the combined view of the phases of transition presented in Chapter 2 (Fig. 8) had drawn together from prior transition models. This literature suggested the ‘middle’ phase of transition, *Learning*, would

involve encounter, adjustment, provisional adjustment, inner contradictions, inner crisis, and navigating 'the neutral zone'. Literature indicated that this might involve newcomers 'going through an in-between time when the old is gone but the new isn't fully operational' (Bridges 2009:5). However, in this research, this was not seen to be the case because those involved had already completed the move. Transition here did not include a 'honeymoon' (Williams 1999) period quite the contrary, but it did call for degrees of 'provisional adjustment', and at times, the lack of information or support brought 'confusion' in relation to administration, deliverables, and expectations of the new role. Whilst this was the phase of encountering reality, it was an active more than a neutral zone, and one shown in previous chapters to be a critical period during early transition.

Throughout the phase of *Learning* emotions and feelings of excitement, as well as love and pride, in the new career and being a lecturer continued to flow. Academic careers were considered by practitioners to be meaningful, enjoyable, and ones that these newcomers were in the main happy to be part of. This kind of career change was deemed as one to be proud of because higher education and academic work was something that made an actual difference to people's lives. At this point, transition featured being: valued; trusted; challenged; motivated; grown and growing; and thriving. Newcomers moved through: re-adjusting; comparing; sense-making; another awakening; adjusting; and re-forming as they settled into academic life.

Here this middle phase highlighted that it was a time of learning, self-discovery, and one that involved different kinds of workload linked to teaching and administration. A time that identified *tipping points*, which through the ETC, can be seen here through three different cogs (Fig.20). Cycles that required attention, information, efficient knowledge transfer and fitting support systems. Although newcomers were learning for themselves, and being supported by people inside the new workplace and outside of the academy, there was work to be done that related to theory, practice, and policy in order to improve the transitional (and employee) experience to academic life and work as well as the evolving experience and early transition process. Discovering the features associated

with the negative events helped identify where improvements can be made and where best practice should continue to be embedded and maintained. Areas that are addressed later in this thesis.

5.4. Chapter Conclusion

Two themes featured in this second phase of early transition presented here as *Learning* and the middle part of the early transition cycle. *Learning* related to all participants across all institutions and represented the phase when practitioners arrived to new positions occupying their places in higher education. Here *Learning* could start to be seen as a 'game' (Lucas 2006) in academic life and the place where these practitioners learned about the academic role whilst carrying it out. The findings confirmed that these practitioners needed to 'approach academic life with as few illusions as possible' (Grant and Sherrington 2016:8) and that early-on they needed to be prepared for understanding the present state of play (Lucas 2006:57).

The passage through the *Learning* phase did not bring 'stabilisation' (Nicholson 1990) even if practitioners had 're-plugged' (Bridges 2009:5) themselves into work connected to their applied field and subject areas. Instead, *Learning* was a continual process of self-discovery and self-direction which most, in this study, needed to deal and cope with to survive. Most of these practitioners had gone from being part of a team, or leading a team, to an individual operating in a community of collaboration and left to work things out for themselves without adequate or fitting support mechanisms and little formal guidance.

The first theme emerged as *settling in* highlighting that most practitioners underwent similar experiences which surfaced as a voyage of discovery and one that did not have a unified timescale for passage or completion, unlike Williams (1999) model suggested. The issue was formed around being able to get the right information, and the right level of transitional support, *before* these practitioners needed to know about it otherwise delays, struggles, and frustrations surfaced. Practitioners could not get off to a strong start in an academic career or life nor could efficient transitions occur. From the second theme, *environment, and shock*, it was clear that encounters with reality required large

investments of time, different degrees of this, and senses of 'provisional adjustment' (Williams 1999) and being able to pass through personal tipping points as they arose. The identified risk was that practitioners time was consumed by tasks that did not carry academic currency, leaving little time for these practitioners to invest in the activities that did carry recognisable merit, or for their personal lives. Early on, the long-term future needed to be focused on as much as the present time, but this was not seen to occur, and another risk identified here especially for those hoping to build academic careers as part of transition.

The overriding sense emerging from this second phase of *Learning* was the individual and diverse nature of the transitional experience. The more this was understood made it clearer that there is a need for on-boarding systems and transition processes to support successful transitions. The problem appeared, as Blackmore and Blackwell (2003:23) highlighted earlier in Chapter 2, that institutions were shown to be 'do[ing] little for themselves' to create these systems. This opens the possibility for this study to help, for work relating to this to continue and enables other research threads found during *Learning* to be pursued later.

This chapter concludes phase two of *Learning* the 'game' of academic life having gained further appreciation and insights of the experience of transition during the early years after arrival. Here this chapter has contributed new insights and understanding to the knowledge of the experience of transition, it has provided a visualisation of the journey this far and adds to what is known about 'transition cycles' from the perspectives of university academics from practice. The transitional experience, as it evolves, can be viewed and new insights gained. The transitional journey does not end here and the third phase of transition, *Playing*, is presented next.

Part II -

Chapter 6- Phase Three: *Playing*

‘A transition, by definition, means you start
in one place and finish in another’
– *Federica Mogherini* -

6.0 Introduction

This last phase of the early transition cycle is presented in this chapter as phase three, *Playing*, and portrays the 'end-point' of transition during the early years. The themes and quotes presented here result from a comprehensive interpretation process where Thematic Analysis was applied to help gain understanding of the transition experience and to answer the research question, as in the previous findings chapters. *Playing* occurs from the various encounters with the realities and experiences in academic life as transition evolves. This last phase is the most difficult of all three as practitioners come to terms and deal with transition realities. Practitioner stories indicate features that change things, areas connected to emotions and feelings (both positive and negative); views of institutions, higher education, and academic career opportunities; and perceptions of their role, the importance of academics from practice and of what is or is not important in academic life. *Playing* is understood from practitioner stories to consist of three substantial themes: place and identity (6.1); falling and adjusting (6.2); and rebounding and evolving (6.3). As with other chapters, a visualisation of this phase is provided (6.4) to complete the transition cycle. This chapter closes (6.5) by summarising the key features and defining phase three of the early transition cycle as *Playing*.

6.1 Place and Identity

Place and identity emerged as involving the creation of a reputation and establishing credibility in another field outside of professional life, that of academic life.

6.1.1 Professional Identity and Establishing Credibility

From arrival, practitioners were placed in posts as new academics whose work focus was mainly teaching related. Individually, and as a group, they held professional identities which until now had served well in former careers. These professional identities were shown to have defined practitioners as experts in various fields outside of academia. However, the emerging problem was that professional credentials, although prized by institutions, did not transfer easily, or translate directly into academic life as Goodall (2016:243) and Clegg (2008:356-338) argued when highlighting the differences between professional and academic domains, identities, and views of practitioners earlier in

Chapter 2. Transition meant moving to a disciplinary field where former identities were no longer relevant and replaced by a new identity, that of university lecturer or senior lecturer. Practitioners showed they had not lost who they were, but the new job required them to form another identity: a feature missing from the prior transition cycles reviewed in Chapter 2 but revealed here.

Prior transition cycles had not addressed changing, or merging, professional identities, the bringing together of the professional and the academic, as part of making a transition to a new career. Stories here highlighted, as Bridges (2009:5) suggested, a requirement to end, lose or let go of something but as shown here, this also featured replacing and reconstructing another identity, an academic identity. Here the study located an area open to 'inner crisis' (Williams 1999) as the 'letting go' or 'accepting' process unfolded differently for each individual with some more ready to give up past identities than others, as discussed later in this chapter. This discovery added insight to what is known from previous transition cycles where identity is not addressed as part of the evolving experience and the potential exists for future research to develop understanding.

The job title gave an indication of rank within the community, helping practitioners develop opinions of the importance of their role as viewed by peers which in some cases contrasted with practitioners views of themselves. Practitioners stories revealed that quite early on they were labelled by other peers as a 'surprise', not 'proper' or the 'real deal' and for some this meant encountering situations where practitioners were assessed and judged to be the 'real deal' or not:

I remember on my first day a colleague saying that she was due to mentor somebody and they were the proper real deal. They came from [another university] and were "proper". I took that to mean that they were academic. I sat there and said nothing but I thought I have come with *years* of [professional] experience behind me and I was teaching ...I thought right I am going to have to prove that I am the 'real deal' (Eleanor, N4)

Here differences could be seen as Eleanor (N4) had not been allocated a mentor, but a colleague had been, a researcher. Additionally, the experience that Eleanor noted here suggested that she was being viewed as Clegg (2008:356-338) suggested in Chapter 2 as not a 'serious academic'. Judgements of peers here seemed based on research profiles and academic reputation: profiles and identities that most newcomers did not yet have.

From day one of joining the university someone said to me what is your academic specialism? I said, I am a generalist. They looked at me down their nose because in their specialism they were an academic renowned for [their subject]. They never spoke to me again. (John, N1)

These findings chimed with a moment in my transition experience and academic practice. I recalled, having been a senior lecturer for a few years and moving to a new department/centre. An academic colleague said to me 'people like you don't normally get into places like this'. By this that person meant that I was not a researcher, not an academic as they viewed one. Remembering, and reflecting on that moment in my practice here, has made me recognise that this was a distinguishing comment separating academics into categories and standing amongst colleagues. Research trumped what I had accomplished previously and inferred that, like Eleanor (N4) found, that without this a newcomer lacked an important part of being recognised as a 'proper' academic as part of the evolving transitional experience.

Here this struck a chord as status and standing were found to emerge during the experiences of transition at different times and in different ways for different practitioners. Comments and experiences that are striking to find in existence through practitioner stories and not just a one-off comment to one practitioner. But the opinions of others did not deter practitioners from continuing the transitional journey or stop those in this study from pursuing this career. Instead, it meant becoming accustomed to the 'rules and norms of academic life' (Grant and Sherrington 2006:176) in which place and identity feature strongly as important. Reputations mattered and from the

comments it became clear that peers tended to compare practitioners to those coming from the research route.

6.1.2 Creating an Academic Identity and Reputations

Developing an academic identity involved creating a new reputation. Institutions had sought professional expertise and applied knowledge from this group, not academic profiles. However, once inside, practitioner stories revealed that unless their colleagues had experienced a professional life for themselves, it became more difficult for them to easily understand, or translate, the practitioners expertise in relation to the standard hallmarks of academic credibility and reputation of communities. However, academics from practice did not know how to create an academic identity that would be considered as comparable. This presented an area of risk and vulnerability for new entrants that they were not prepared for because it impacted on the sense of self-worth and had the potential to undermine confidence.

From the stories it was clear that two of the participants arrived at their posts holding a doctorate, one had started to undertake a master's qualification and the others all held professional qualifications already at masters/postgraduate level. Additionally, it was a requirement for these professional practitioners to have professional membership of their associated professional body which all did. However, most remained unsure, or unaware, of how to create an academic identity or convert a professional identity into one that mattered and fitted into this new world of work:

I don't know how to be an academic from their sort of thoroughbred academic background. I am used to managing a client, hitting my deadlines, hitting my budgets and all that sort of thing. (Alex, N2)

Practitioners had of course been socialised in different ways but not through research avenues or within academic workplaces. Creating an academic identity was harder and more complicated. Here the stories, as Clegg (2006:340) suggested earlier in the reviewed literature an academic identity can cannot merely be 'read off from descriptions of mainly teaching, research, or management roles'. Here, professional identities,

qualifications, professional membership, accomplishments, and so on required merging into an identity but as the stories here showed practitioners struggled with this concept and knowing how to do it. It was not found easy to create, to fit into or define their new self. Few new academics from practice could easily identify who they were within the context of an academic community, or in academic life, in the more conventional way associated with being research-active. Regardless of their length of time in academic life, practitioners found that an academic identity was not easy to clearly articulate or place. Here this study locates a point of vulnerability revealing that even towards the end point of early transition academics from practice had not yet fully got a 'feel for the game' (Lucas 2006:57) or who they now were inside this new workplace and community. Practitioners were less confident with expressing an academic identity than they were a professional identity because it was not an expression that they had come across this far. As such, none had considered identity creation or were fully aware of this or understood the importance of this within the context of the new workplace.

This was found here as an indicator that transition had not yet fully occurred as practitioners shared what they considered an academic identity was or meant. In the main, professional practitioners did not know but thought this was connected to research profiles more than teaching. Even those who had been teacher educators in practice felt it was research connected. The study recognised this as problematic for those wishing to pursue academic careers because without a clear academic identity or knowing the career path to be carved surrounding this, practitioners were at risk of not forming what was an important requirement of academic life. Hence, this emerged as a 'struggle' (Lucas 2006) and a feature that other transition cycles had not addressed. But opened a gap for future research to explore.

6.1.3 Creating the Next New 'Self'

Phase three showed practitioners coming to terms with identity changes and the spaces they occupied in academic life. Making the move to academic life was reported as a journey of self-discovery that featured finding themselves and articulating this new 'being' into a profile that used another type of language, academic language. For

example, being able to express themselves and their accomplishments to academic peers rather than to professional peers using a short biography or profile statement. Words and language that meant something meaningful to the academic community. Most did not understand how they could reduce many years of experience, expertise, and study down into a few paragraphs without losing the essence or getting it right for the new world and the digital world (websites). Practitioners were seen to observe, and make sense of what they saw valued, from an inside viewpoint as they began 're-constructing' (Williams 1999) themselves under a professional-academic identity without guidance.

Professional backgrounds provided 'signals' (Taylor 1999) that placed and identified practitioners to peers and where respondents reported confidence in expressing who they were in relation to subject or discipline areas, transition could be viewed to be occurring:

I am a Lecturer ... I feel really proud to be a Lecturer. I think there is a real kudos ... I am really pleased that I have a discipline. I aspire to be a Senior Lecturer and it's part of my identity. It's part of what I do and it's part of where I have arrived at. (Marie, N5)

Practitioners used different terms to identify themselves such as lecturer, teacher, educator and academic but for some the disciplinary identity was far stronger. Engineering, law, and medical professionals did not 'let go' of past identities or exchange them readily and expressed a dual identity as professional and academic identities were merged, losing neither. Practitioners views of identity and how they considered themselves showed that they viewed themselves as lecturers, as different to other academics and as experts in the subject, and professional field, that they came to educate others about through higher education.

Making the transition was shown to be bigger than the 'job' and for most practitioners it appeared to be a sense of vocation that drew them towards the teaching side of academic work. Vocation in the sense that the narratives showed that working in higher education as a lecturer was a type of work, occupation, and life that each wanted to give more to. Work that they felt they were suited to and that they had knowledge to contribute to and

experiences/expertise to offer which mattered or would make a difference to the lives and careers of others. Lecturing, teaching, and making a meaningful difference featured strongly, a more vocational and people-orientated focus.

Although academic identity was still not developed during this third phase of *Playing*, 'multiple identities' (Robert, N9) and 'layers of identity' (Elena, N4) had continued to be added to and accumulated as the transition experience evolved and progressed. These are characterised and discussed later in this chapter.

6.1.4 Professional Risks and Challenged Credibility

For some, early transition involved coming under scrutiny from fellow peers and being identified by others as a good academic colleague, or not. Labelling brought further risks and struggles: cultural struggles that most newcomers contended with during early transition adding to the 'pitfalls/problems' identified in Nicholson (1999):

I can remember sitting in a part-time evening lecture, where a colleague was texting one of my students in my class ... I didn't actually know he was doing this ... the lecturer was checking up on me, to see how well I was performing, and was the student enjoying his experience! I found it negative. It was a personal attack on my academic ability ... by me bringing it to my colleagues attention, and to everybody else's, he understood that he had crossed the boundaries.
(John, N1)

Here a tension and risk was shown occurring between the two worlds, and with other narratives showing practitioners were being observed and assessed by peers knowingly or unknowingly. At times this involved them having their academic judgement questioned or challenged, as Nikita (N18) highlighted.

I have a group and they have passed everything ... everyone on one side is 'wow great job' but then someone said to me 'if you have everyone passing you have to reason how come'. I said 'is it possible that they are actually doing well, are they not stupid?' ... On one side everyone is

like 'wow how did you do it?' On the other side, some people are like 'that's impossible'. I actually had someone sitting in and double marking everything to say, you know what, it is not me being generous we actually have quality pieces. (Nikita, N18)

Practitioner stories showed individuals were confident dealing with such behaviour but they did not expect this to happen as part of the experience of transition or as an employee. This highlighted the potential for associated risks and dangers during early transition especially when developing reputations risked damage through the behaviour of others, their peers. Practitioners dealt with challenges to their expertise in their own ways, some tackled situations directly with peers, others reflected on the situation and set boundaries for the future, and a few spoke to other colleagues to obtain guidance. As Boden, Epstein and Kenway (2005:51) highlighted, academic reputations matter especially when operating in academic life because it is viewed as the most important aspect associated with being a university academic and this being damaged was not to be taken lightly or accepted.

Potential for conflicts and misunderstanding emerged as encounters were interpreted, responded to, and acted upon differently as these two professional cultures merged. Findings showed that when reputations and credentials were threatened or challenged, not by institutions or line managers, but by others, academics from practice viewed this negatively during early transition. However earlier models cannot be criticised for not taking this into account as part of making a transition to a new career. Findings showed that practitioners needed to be aware of the importance of reputation and academic identity early on.

Practitioners entered another 'speciality' (Jones 2012) in terms of occupation and needed to quickly become accustomed to differences in working cultures and ways. Not being fully prepared, being new and not having exposure to a socialisation in academic life in more conventional ways exposed other potential risks. Practitioners recounted how they openly shared knowledge as one might expect but the problem arose when individuals found they were not credited for their contributions, as Georgina (N16) highlighted:

We were given an allocated task, myself and another person who started the same time, to actually work on a guideline for supervision. She decided to silently lead on it which was fine. Come the deadline it wasn't actually done ... I put something together, sent it to her for comments but what happened was that she distributed it ... because she was the one who actually emailed everything out it felt like it was her piece of work. She took ownership of it. I think I need to have a different way of dealing with things next time in terms of co-operation.

(Georgina, N16)

Individual contributions risked going unnoticed or unacknowledged. Practitioners, whether knowingly or unknowingly, had entered a highly competitive work environment and culture as Lucas (2006) had alluded to. I recalled times where ideas I had given were taken by others and either passed off as their own or developed and published without credit. For newcomers like Georgina (N16) who sought to create an academic career from the start this was not a good early experience. Other stories, for example John (N1), pointed out other issues:

'I had put most of the work in and shared my knowledge and information with a colleague so that we could publish a journal article together. When it came to this they were going to be first named which I was not happy about because it was my work and not theirs. I felt used and taken advantage of. I did not write again with this person or share my knowledge from the professional field.'

As such, building early reputations and getting credit for work arose as an early risk if newcomers did not recognise they were in a competitive environment and 'game' (Lucas 2006). But, passing on of needed knowledge, information and 'ways' to new university academics did not happen during early transition. Instead, self-discovery and learning was relied on as time passed. It was evident that a 'feel for the game' as Lucas (2006:57) mentioned earlier through reference to Bourdieu's (1998:25) work was required.

During the early phases of transition, *Finding* and *Learning*, practitioners revealed a degree of naivety about academic workplaces when compared to Lucas's (2006) views of

academic life, and evidenced here in relation to published work or being credited. At the outset, practitioners views of academic life were often seen as 'an environment which was supportive and gentle ... where no one saw anybody else as a threat', as Carol (N17) noted. However, as time elapsed few practitioners had the chance to develop their own academic identity or reputation and their time was invested in other activities that did not accumulate academic currency, which as seen here was risky.

From the findings, it appeared that another community, the student body, were labelling and identifying practitioners. Practitioners reported how they were viewed as an expert, coach, facilitator, mentor, guide, pastor, tutor, supervisor, knowledge-bearer, problem-solver, examiner, or assessor:

Student[s] come to me and say 'oh you explain things very clearly. We actually understood you. It is very easy to understand and 'thank you' ... you feel you actually contributed something. (Daisy, N12)

Practitioners stories highlighted that students thought differently about these university academics and valuing them. But a degree of dis-placement, or re-placement, was evident during transition potentially bringing 'uncertainty' (Williams 1999) connected to place and identity:

I am quite reticent to talk to other academics about my identity because I think I am not what I should be. It's tricky isn't it? I am very aware of the holes in my bio as an academic because I don't publish, I don't research, I just teach. But I use my expertise to teach. I am very aware of that fact. I am not keen on advertising myself. I am not confident of my 'product' as me yet. I have a friend he was a professor ... he is a proper academic! He has a list of publications as long as my arm. I am definitely not in that league. I don't even scratch the surface. (Ellura, N7)

By the *Playing* phase practitioners were aware of what the 'holes' were but struggled to have the time or the information of where to begin filling in these gaps. The problem

found, and as I know from personal experience, was as stories showed there are no teaching-only routes to promotion. Academic promotion criteria link to being research-active which this group of university academics were not or could not get started on. Making the transition to academic life and work meant that for most practitioners they were stuck at the point they entered for a long time. This might even be forever for some. Unlike professional life there was no career ladder to climb or promotion to be had which did not appear right in a workplace.

Nevertheless, pride in teaching as a realm of academic work was expressed, but there was a distinct lack of confidence when it came to the research realm of academic work or how to convert what they arrived with into areas that filled the 'holes'. This was viewed here, and by practitioners, as problematic when it resulted in confidence levels dipping instead of increasing with length of service and as the experience of transition evolved. For some practitioners this 'hole' brought the feeling of being a fraud or alien instead of belonging:

I am starting to have less resistance to calling myself an academic. I just felt a fraud at first. I didn't feel in any way, shape, or form that I was an academic.
(Elena, N4)

Elena (N4) summed up what three other practitioners had begun to feel during the evolving experience of transition and in the *Playing* phase. It was a concern when stories indicated that three experts and intelligent people from the professional field had begun to feel otherwise and this was in line with what Gadsby (2021:1) 'imposters', Wilkinson's (2020:363) 'imposter syndrome' or Oldland's (2011:787) 'fraud' showed earlier in the literature reviewed. Negative aspects were part of transition and had the potential to impact on newcomers identity, self-esteem and beliefs if prolonged.

6.1.5 Not Letting Go of Identity or Reality

Not all practitioner stories showed that individuals felt an academic identity was the most important aspect and not all wanted to develop one if it meant letting go entirely of their professional identity, or the reputations, they had worked hard to establish prior to

transition. John (N1) for example felt an academic identity did not 'trump' a professional identity or reputation.

I don't think I have an academic identity. I still see myself as a practitioner. To be an academic you have to be more than just be a lecturer, or more than just a researcher, or more than just somebody that goes out and applies it, or generates funds and income ... I do all of those things but do I see myself as an academic? I see myself as a [professional] more than anything. I am not certain that [an academic identity] is important ... You have to be a master of all three (teaching, research and consultancy) and I don't think that you ever can be. We can all work in academia but can we all be academics? No. I think we can either be good lecturers, or good researchers or good money income generators but you can't be good at all three ... you have to give something up [one of those] because there isn't enough hours in the day to do everything or be excellent at everything. (John, N1)

As John (N1) notes, there are not enough hours in the day for a person to be excellent at every aspect of academic work or to do everything in academic life, to cover all realms of academic work well. But if there was, then these newcomers had not yet discovered how during early-transition. This pragmatic view resonated with Kettridge, Marshall and Fry (2014:277) who earlier suggested that developing an academic career involved being competent in all areas of academic practice but contributing to two of the four key performance areas, with research being the most important one.

Whilst research was one realm of academic work not all practitioners wanted to prioritise research, but they all did want to balance teaching and research in a way that was fitting and relevant. For most, they also wanted to keep associated and networked with their professional field gaining the mutual benefit from the merger of the academic and professional. None wanted to lose the knowledge, networks or the value gained in the professional field because that world of work fed into their academic practice and vice

versa. Keeping connected and associated with the professional field was important and beneficial.

The reality for new entrants, as Blackmore (2016:175) suggested, and as this study confirmed in relation to academics from practice, was that their best hope was to build reputations because attaining prestige as a researcher might not be in their reach. By this, as the narratives and literature showed, practitioners might be able to begin to create a research reputation in their discipline in the future but achieving prestige might not be possible for these university academics when starting out from ground zero and with no publications. The risk arising was that the longer they took to become research-active the more distant the likelihood of building a research reputation seemed. For example, even after four to five years length of service none (nine) practitioners during transition had not been able to build a research reputation or become involved in research. This was striking because it might be assumed that the rest as they reached this point would be in the same position. Practitioner stories showed that not all were going in search of prestige, having reached a point outside academia where this was achieved or satisfied in other ways, but recognition of their academic work was missing.

In summary, during phase three, *Playing*, practitioners learned several lessons resulting from encounters with the environment, peers, and students. Practitioners picked up that: reputations and expertise from professional life do not readily transfer; their past credentials are not valued in the same way as expected prior to arrival; opportunities for progression are limited without a research profile; the applied does not translate into formal processes or systems; the need to reconstruct identity through merging the professional with the academic is not straightforward; they are being viewed and interpreted by others; the places they occupy are limiting if academic careers are sought; and that they have to overcome any dips in confidence by first 'finding' themselves and working out what matters and what does not. This was done alone with little evidence of institutional intervention, mentoring, or adapted support to aid this feature of transition. Although I did not look at what institutions were doing it was clear from the

stories that very little happened opening an area for future research and the development of practices to pursue.

6.2 Falling and Adjusting

6.2.1 Realities of Falling and Adjustment

The feature of falling, in the sense of experiencing a demotion, and adjusting to this connected with the low points of early-transition. This was found to be a crucial stage coming through strongly and revealed how perceptions changed. Some practitioners realised before arriving or early-on that the move to academic work involved, in a sense, starting again at the 'bottom of the ladder' as Georgina (N16) mentioned earlier but not all began by viewing the move in this way:

I think a lecturer's job, despite being on the very bottom of the ladder, is somewhere where I can actually start. I can learn and actually teach other people as well. That's the reason why I chose it. Management [roles] wasn't my cup of tea! (Georgina, N16)

Practitioners were not new to developing careers or arriving as novices from professional life, quite the contrary, they were needed personnel. However, from the narratives associated with stories of falling and the feelings emerging from the sense of the 'demotion', personal adjustments were required by all which were found to be compelling:

I came here and none of my experience or status mattered. It just felt that people spoke to me as if I was a minion and maybe that was more about me losing my own status. I felt that I had lost my status ... suddenly I feel marginal. (Ellura, N7)

Leonard (N14), like Ellura (N7) and other practitioners, moved from a senior position in the professional field and provided another example but this one was related to having gone from a team culture to being an individual without the same support:

You end up doing everything for yourself. You don't have the secretarial or other support that you would have in business particularly if you were coming from a senior level as I was where you had people who actually made things happen. If I said I wanted this done it was done ... now you have to do all that yourself. You are definitely a one-man band. (Leonard, N14)

Connections with Williams (1999) 'reconstruction and recovery', 'inner contradictions' and 'inner crisis' phases were evident here. Stories depicted points of 'letting-go', or 'quitting' (Williams 1999) fastened to 'new beginning' (Bridges 2009) but also exposed problems having reached the lowest point during early transition. Problems that were not shown to be viewed by practitioners as a 'crisis', but the place where things changed for them personally.

6.2.2 Crossing Other Borders

For ten of these new academics the experience of transition meant crossing borders from one educational system to another leaving their homes abroad to work in UK institutions. This added cultural and global perspectives and insights to the findings showing an additional step associated with the early-transition phase. The transition to academic life and work for some involved not only crossing the borders of professional life to academic life but crossing international borders from one education system to another as well as countries. From the findings, the different ways in which university lecturers are viewed internationally could be seen.

Those involved highlighted the importance allocated to teaching and educating in certain parts of the world outside of the UK.

[In] my country lecturers are seen as kings they don't here. [In the UK] the lecturer arrives at the teaching venue before the students, opens the door for the students, and lets them enter. But not over in my country. There the lecturer stays back and comes in after the students are seated. Sometimes the students stand up for him, he goes in

delivers his lectures and some lecturers don't take questions. There is this culture-shift to make. (Mike, N15)

For some practitioners, transition brought another type of 'shock' (Nicholson, 1990), one not previously identified in the literature. For those moving from overseas, this added an additional dimension to the early experience of transition. International academics from practice brought their own expectations and requirements that needed to be catered for as they entered academic life and work in the UK.

6.2.3 Negative Events Overshadowing Achievement

The findings showed that in relation to a few practitioners who had been in academic life for more than two to three years that another kind of adjustment was required. This followed when the experience of transition was shown to involve passing through a point of rejection on the inside. As mentioned earlier, the lack of real opportunities for promotion to progress up academic ranks was one such point of rejection but there are likely to be others (probation, pay, etc.) that were not shown through the findings. Although not all practitioners had encountered the rejection for promotion yet, it was considered likely that others might in the future follow the same avenue, and for those practitioners who had experienced rejection based on professional credentials or the lack of the sought-after academic profiles then another 'shock' (Nicholson 1999) or 'first shock' (Williams 1999) became part of the story of the experience of transition.

Here the experiences highlighted a place reached by practitioners where opportunities for promotion or onwards movement in academic life were restricted, constrained or not possible. As Ellura (N7) and Alex (N6) noted, it was viewed as a 'dark time' within the transition process:

I applied for the Senior Lectureship and I said to the [line manager] can I put my experiences and everything? She said your previous experience doesn't matter. *But* my previous experience informs the teaching how can you say that what I did for twenty years doesn't matter? ... I am not just an academic I come as a whole! My experience

informs what the students are benefitting from. I have some difficulties [with that] ... it is almost like taking a demotion. A huge, huge demotion. (Ellura, N7)

Instead of reaching a point of increasing confidence and stability in academic life, the negative effects of transition risked eroding or overshadowing achievements and accomplishments. This was evident when practitioners felt stuck or not able to see a clear future ahead:

I applied for [senior lectureship] and I didn't get it. I was encouraged by my superiors to go for it ... then rejected ... before I saw this as a 'career' I don't anymore. The decision is made like that [click of fingers] by someone who doesn't know me ... I am not asking to become a professor it's just a slight step up because there is not that much difference between Lecturer and Senior Lecturer ... I think that if the career progression isn't really there should I go back to industry? I cannot spend the rest of my career in a low position, on low salary, at some point it has to move up ... I either have to go into industry again or move into industry and come back as a Senior Lecturer. I have got a lot of experience now ... the qualities you had to get the job don't count. (Alex, N6)

This type of situation remained memorable for practitioners and some individuals moved on more easily from this phase than others. It was striking to find that seven practitioners were shown through the narratives to have applied for promotion but did not get accepted mainly because they lacked a publication record, external profile or did not hold a doctorate. For others it was too early to apply.

To get through this stage, practitioner narratives showed individuals required different degrees of resilience, patience, and strategies. Linkages here could be seen to the earlier 'modes of adjustment' (Nicholson 1984:172) such as 'absorption' and 'determination' were evident. But educated people, as Taylor (1999:97) observed, are likely to have progression expectations and for practitioners with a range of accumulated knowledge

and expertise this was no different as shown here. Three practitioners, as mentioned earlier, aspired to return to management posts once an academic. The rest did not want to cease being an academic or to stop teaching. Promotion via administration routes were not discussed as options or interests. But the negative side of rejection impacted on employee-employer relationship especially in situations, as Alex (N6) shared, where academics from practice had been encouraged to apply for a promotion or led to believe that this was possible to attain when in reality it was not. Instead, feelings of being misled, not valued for their expertise, and restricted or constrained by systems emerged for those used to being 'seniors' in organisations on the outside.

The phase of *Playing* was not always a time of 'enjoyment in sense-making' as claimed by Nicholson (1990). Instead falling and adjusting meant that practitioners began looking backwards, recalling their past careers and achievements, and making comparisons with what they had achieved in academic life. Although this was not seen as a 'crisis' (Williams 1999) point, it was a time when practitioners narratives showed them passing through different kinds of emotions and feelings. Emotions and feelings connected to Williams (1999) models showed states of being 'ok' or 'distress/despair'. When the stories here were considered in line with the emotions highlighted by Briner (1999:327) it became evident that *Playing* linked. Emotions such as shock (uneasy), fears confirmed (nowhere to go), dashed-hopes (disappointment), detesting (disliking the system or institution), annoyance (being cross not angry), apprehension (made a mistake, no going back, unsure of next move) were seen to emerge. Never did self-pity, envy, jealousy, or gloating arise but stories showed that it took energy and 'emotional labour' (Kidd 1998:285) to deal with and overcome.

It was here that the place where the experience of transition led to views of academic life, work, institutions, and self-changing. During *Playing* practitioners became more aware of the need to have the right academic credentials if onward, or upwards, movement was to be achieved in academic life. This would take time to build up and as such presented more of a career risk to some than others even if promotion criteria existed it was heavily research-based not teaching-based or practice-based.

6.2.4 Never Reaching Stabilisation or Research Spaces

For those reaching phase three and undergoing the experience where onward, or upward, progression could not be achieved, it meant 'stabilisation' (Nicholson 1990) was not reached during the five years of early transition. Instead, unsteadiness mirrored 'quitting' or 'extended crisis' (Williams 1999) as practitioners realised that conventional systems for promotion and onward movement relied heavily on research and the formal processes did not account, or cater for, their applied knowledge, professional capital, or expertise in the same way as it did for research, or academic profiles formed through the more traditional entry route. The newer universities in this study did not, from the stories, show to have a teaching-only progression routes that led to promotion. Delaying getting started with creating a research profile and carving areas of research activity had consequences later as reports showed. For most, the opportunity to become actively involved in research never got off the ground leading to different levels of dissatisfaction.

Initially I thought that I would have the opportunity to research and publish articles ... but currently there is no time for it. I wasn't very happy because I thought that I would have the opportunity to research because I have always wanted to use the laboratory at [identifier] to do experiments, write an article and get it published. (Mike, N15)

Little in-built 'slack in the systems' (Nicholson 1990) was evident for any of these newcomers to enable practitioners to get started with academic research or pursue aspects of their teaching interests further. This combined with the problem that at least sixteen practitioners did not know how or where to begin converting their experience into research outputs. It was evident that few, only two, mentioned received mentoring for teaching practice, none received mentoring for research practice, none received career management mentoring and nineteen were not provided with role models to guide and coach them as new entrants into academic cultures, life, and work. Often practitioners stories showed that they were left alone to learn through self-direction and to discover for themselves what was needed for example:

I asked [a professor] how do you manage the workload with the teaching and the research he turned around and said the problem is perennial. You just have to be engaged in pure [traditional] research. That was the real moment that made me realise that as an academic, to be a true academic, I needed to engage in pure [traditional] research ... that made me realise will I ever get to being a true academic? (Ellura, N7)

Here, Ellura (N7), highlighted that when she asked for advice about how to get started in research in her role, and to manage teaching workloads at the same time, she was told that the problem of balancing these two aspects of work had been around for a long time and that she needed to become involved in research to become an academic. Practitioners were found asking questions about an academic role as part of the journey and comparing themselves with a 'true academic': people with research reputations and publications because these activities were known to be important in academic life and for careers, as Grant and Sherrington (2006:176) identified. None mentioned pedagogic research. None, as the stories showed, found that a 'true academic' had identities or reputations created from being a 'teacher and supervisor' (Grant and Sherrington 2006:176). Practitioner narratives, highlighted that although they proved themselves as university 'teachers' prestige came from research reputations not teaching and learning, the work practitioners had invested time in. Findings showed that maybe all practitioners could hope for was to build a reputation rather than attain academic promotion or prestige (Blackmore 2016:17). Without adequate support, time, and mentoring this would not be an easy journey either and may not match with practitioner expectations.

6.2.5 Re-shaping, copying and rebalancing priorities

Findings revealed a time of 'transformation' (Williams 1999), not a 're-construction' (Williams 1999) at this point as practitioners re-shaped their futures, copied the valuable, rebalanced priorities, and dealt differently with situations:

I have applied for some roles while I have been here and some have been successful and others not ... somebody else got one of the roles I applied for and this person is very good at what they do ... but there is a certain element where they keep passing work to me. I am thinking 'no, you got the job not me'. Initially I was very calm about it, 'yes, I will help you'. It is two and half years down the line and it is still happening and I am kicking it back. I wasn't good enough to get the role therefore I am not doing your job for you ... I am a lot stronger about that ... I am being a lot more selfish I suppose. An institution of this size will take advantage of your good nature and as much as you are prepared to give they will take ... a learning curve! (Bonnie, N11)

Stories revealed lines were redrawn, partly through experiences but also to invest time in areas of academic work where returns were seen to be greater. Until this point, practitioners described themselves as giving of knowledge, professional capital, expertise, and time. The encounters of demotion and adjusting turned individuals towards a focus on what was important within academia, for themselves and for future survival.

6.2.6 Preventing Pitfalls and Managing Transition

The various 'pitfalls' or risks could be reduced with adequate systems designed to support transition from practice to academic life and the management of expectations from the start that aided fully informed decision making about the move to and onwards within academic life, as Derek (N3) highlighted:

[I knew] I was going to bring my professional experience into the classroom and that I wasn't going to spend much time on any sort of academic endeavours such as research and that. It was going to be about lecturing. It was going to be about taking on very poorly performing modules and making them perform to the standard ... and that was exactly what it was. (Derek, N3)

Derek (N3), was one of those who had not applied for promotion or onward progression during the experience of early transition however he, like a few of the others, had decided to develop themselves by becoming research trained and undertaking a doctorate during the phase of *Playing*. Derek (N3) was not alone here three other practitioners had begun to pursue a doctoral route during the evolving transitional process. Two others were seriously considering this in the future, and it seemed likely that the rest who sought to develop an academic career would follow this path eventually. The motivation, as the stories highlighted, were varied to include wanting to get a PhD, develop an area of interest from the professional field that had relevance to the discipline, as a course of continuing professional development, for intellectual stimulation, to become published, to be able to achieve promotion, self-actualisation, to feel a sense of accomplishment in this new field and to feel like they had become a full academic. From the stories, this seemed like the next natural step on from teaching as part of the new job role and career.

The narratives during *Playing* did not represent this phase, or the pitfalls experienced, necessarily as a crisis but revealed a time and place in the transitional journey where views dramatically changed and new understandings formed. Instead of bringing about a 'crisis' point, as Williams (1999) showed, practitioner stories revealed the start of divisions and separation. The findings identified that new academics from practice needed the right support, help and guidance to develop what Nicholson (1999) referred to as 'helpful expectations'; a 'realistic preview' and a 'self-appraisal'. But institutions also needed to create and provide these which relied on them knowing how to do this and knowing academics from practice as new employees, their needs, and requirements. However, the issues found here are also considered preventable situations and these negative consequences need not arise.

In summary, a turning point (change) resulted rather than a 'crisis' (Williams 1999) as practitioners altered, reshaped, and started to mirror what was observed, or considered, valuable inside academic life and by institutions. Instead of being stuck in a 'crisis' state these university academics from practice were found to use a turning point to see a new direction and way forward. Practitioners changed to fit the environment 'going native',

in the sense of trying to be like other academics, mirroring their behaviour and doing what was seen to be valued and wanted in this new workplace. For institutions, it became evident that this change risked them, and the academy, losing the knowledge, experience, and the difference that academics from practice brought. During phase three, *Playing*, practitioners stories showed they continued to learn lessons related to: starting again at the 'bottom' of the career ladder; going from being an expert in one field to being viewed as a novice in another; and the fact that professional credibility did not transfer or fit academic systems for progression, upward or onward movement within academic life or as part of a continuing career.

6.3 Rebounding and Evolving

6.3.1 Reconstruction and Recovery

Here the experience of transition returns to a more positive phase of 'reconstruction and recovery' (Williams 1999) and showed that these academics from practice continued to love and enjoy teaching, but there came a point in transition where individuals turned to give serious thought to themselves and their longer-term futures. This included personal aspirations, goals, survival strategies, and remedies to problems they had found in existence during the evolving transitional experience. During this third phase practitioners had the advantage of what they had learned and new knowledge from the various experiences to draw upon to use to inform activities, thinking, behaviour and the next transition step. This was one of the few times where practitioners were shown to give time and space to themselves. A time when things turned towards *Playing* in the 'game' (Lucas 2006) of academic life or making alternative decisions.

Practitioners had come to understand, as best they could, what was 'important in building an academic career and what [wasn't]' (Boden, Epstein and Kenway 2005:9). Individuals reached the stage where they needed to give things up as mentioned in this chapter and 'let go' as Williams (1999) and Bridges (2009:5) observed in a transition cycle. Reconstruction and recovery at times appeared uncomfortable, stressful, and emotionally draining. Individuals reached this stage in their own time and passed through it at their own speed. Practitioner stories reported this as a deeply memorable time that

led to ‘accepting’, ‘quitting’ (Williams 1999) and different forms of ‘new beginnings’ (Bridges 2009:5).

From further interpretation of the findings a new model emerged, termed here as Situated Transitions (Early-Transition Academics), Fig. 21 enabling this inquiry to focus in on the ‘turning point’.

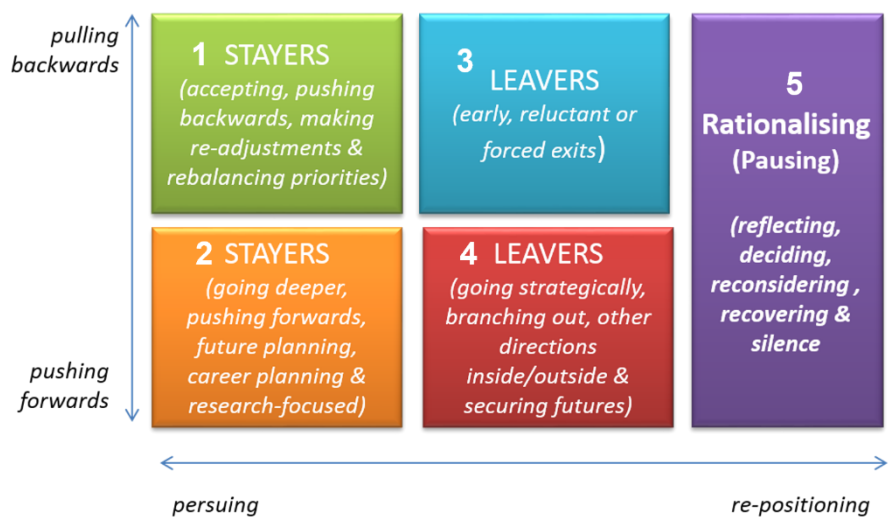


Figure 21. Situated Transitions (Early-Transition Academics)

This was a pivotal point during the evolving experience and one where practitioner stories showed sub-divisions emerging within this academic group that had not arisen before from the stories or shown to exist in other transition models. It became evident that practitioners had become divided into different camps separated after the transition experience altered thinking or where negative events led individuals to taking stock of the entire situation: the place they had reached once inside academic life and what the future appeared to hold for them.

Five different sub-groups emerged categorising practitioners into stayers and leavers. University academics who decided either to continue pushing forwards or those who were pulling backwards or leaving. Outside of this was a group found engaged in rationalising (pausing) before making a final decision. Eventually, as the stories revealed,

these people would move into one of the other sub-groups to become a stayer or leaver but for now were undecided. This new model is used to frame the discussions in this section.

6.3.2 Group 1 and 2 - Stayers and Remaining

As shown, two types of *stayers* emerged from practitioners narratives. The first sub-group (1) consisted of practitioners who, having experienced the move, decided to stay 'accepting' (Williams 1999) and continuing to enjoy academic work realising that they needed to gain a rebalance between their working and personal lives by making readjustments, rebalancing priorities, and pushing backwards in relation to excessive workloads or where things were not possible to do or achieve. The findings showed this group making decisive readjustments related to working and personal lives brought about by the evolving transitional experience. Practitioners stories showed that new operating boundaries were established, and life plans constructed:

It has only been five years and two of those years I spent doing a full course and yet I have come a long way. I have done a lot. I guess my biggest problem is where to next? I do not want to continue at this pace and I am thinking it would be nice to settle down for a couple of years and let it peter along and then maybe let it move on again ... I don't want to miss out on my children. That was the whole point of doing this ... I still want to continue to enjoy what I am doing. I still want to continue to teach ... you have to ask yourself do I really want to be an academic? But until you really know what being an academic is all about you cannot make that decision. (Bonnie, N11)

Other stayers (2), instead of slowing the pace down slightly began anchoring themselves more deeply inside academic life and were discovered pushing forwards becoming more research focused and motivated towards this direction and work. All but one of this sub-group, a Dr. already, were found embarking on or considering undertaking a doctorate in a field of their professional interest. A research study that linked their academic and

professional work together. These university academics attempted to discover more about how they could get started in research 'life' by talking to academic peers known to be research active. For practitioners in this sub-group, they made career decisions and important ones connected to ensuring longer-term employment mobility within academic life:

I need to look to the future and say well actually if I want recognition outside of this university building, if I want recognition and mobility across the sector then I need to have multiple identities. That is not something that is required of me in this job ... so I am starting to make some career decisions about myself ... I am making decisions about me and about what I value as a part of this process. (Robert, N9)

When these practitioners reached the point where they realised from the evolving experience of transition that they needed to look more towards the future, secure their options beyond the limits of their local institution, become more fully immersed in academic life, attain promotion, fill in the 'holes' or be recognised as a 'true' academic, then changes were required, and personal strategies/remedies (Nicholson 1990) identified. It was intriguing to discover the changes brought about by inside encounters and realities, for some practitioners, it meant they wanted recognition, to have career options made available to them and to continue to do meaningful work that encompassed different realms of academic activities and not just limited to teaching or constrained by administration.

From findings, it was not clear whether role models who had become academics from practice existed to be mentors or coaches for these newcomers. From the literature there did not appear to be a body of knowledge for practitioners to draw upon in relation to developing their academic careers from practice. Time was of the essence because, the longer practitioners left it, the less time they had available to invest in the direction that was needed to build up a research profile or carve out an academic career path for themselves.

Here I recognised that I was part of the group of stayers (2) who in doing this doctorate had transitioned to the doctoral pathway. But unlike this group, my motivation was not only to remain within academic life and engaged in academic work I wanted to understand more about the range of academic staff that I worked with, from a variety of entry routes, so that I could best help them with their academic practice, curriculum designs and continuing professional development. I wanted to be able to make a useful contribution to my field, that of academic development, and peers by understanding the transition experience.

6.3.3 Group 3 and 4 - Leavers and Ejecting

In contrast to stayers, two types of *leavers* emerged from practitioners stories. A group (3) who had, or were about to, eject themselves from academic life for several reasons. These university academics found the risk of remaining in higher education without job security, promotion prospects or the diminishing of professional credentials too high a price to pay. Four no longer received enjoyment from the role and looked to new fields to gain new knowledge and grow, or share, their accumulated skills and talents. Findings showed the driving forces for change based on the transitional experiences this far, levels of job satisfaction and the associated financial or career risks of remaining in academic life. This group decided to eject themselves from academic life before it became too late to return to practice or move onwards to other areas.

The financial and career risks provided impetus especially when secure futures could not be guaranteed, or interview promises fulfilled. In Simon's (N2) situation, a lecturer on a three-year contract initially and who had taken the risk to move based on what was alluded to during interview, as well as the hope that a permanent contract would result, explained:

It is just a shame really how it has occurred, but that is not from a teaching perspective, it is from an institution management perspective. I suppose from up on high if you like, the people that we don't see. I knew that it was a risk when I joined and it has turned out that that risk revealed itself. I am fortunate that I have been able to do something

about it very quickly. I will come back and I will continue to teach and lecture ... so it certainly has not been wasted maybe just disappointing how it has just fizzled out just as you got going. (Simon, N2)

Depending on where they were in their own life-cycle and financially, some practitioners appeared to be in a stronger position and able to move on quickly when the role was no longer exciting, meeting expectations or satisfying:

From my point of view it was, and it still is, [a] 'hobby'. Not in the negative sense, not in the trivial sense, but something that I enjoy doing. The moment I stop enjoying I just stop it. That is why I have stopped working [here] because it was just not an interesting or rewarding experience ... (Leonard, N14)

The other type of *leavers* (4) were those who had begun, or were beginning, to grow in new directions independent of their institutions and spread their own wings. Unlike the stayers (2) who wanted to go deeper into academic life, this group looked towards a longer-term future that combined the best of both worlds. The findings showed this group engaged in planning their next career and life move knowing it would mean eventually leaving the institution and potentially academic life and work if it did not provide opportunities, job satisfaction or value the contribution they made. From the stories this next move appeared imminent, but no timescale was given. Once the future pathway was laid this group were leaving but it was clear that this would be a decision they made in their own time, when the time was right, and they were ready to continue to transition but elsewhere.

Due to the early transition experiences, this group (4) had been put off going deeper into academic life. Individuals responded to the negative events by deciding to branch out in other ways taking their expertise to places where it would be valued, and credentials understood. This group explored other directions, places, and opportunities to transfer their accumulated knowledge and skills either inside or outside higher education. Individuals focused on securing their futures, freeing themselves of constraints and revisited the different options available to them before it was too late:

I am actually coming to an end but I have got a long end. I can't retire until I am 60 possibly and possibly may have to go on a bit longer. I keep hoping that something is going to rejuvenate me. That something is going to come in that is going to make it. It could be that I go part-time because that could be something else to focus on outside of my working life. I would like it to be slightly less now. Isn't it funny nothing ever works out as you imagine it or as you planned ... and you wouldn't have known any of that until you had been through it. (Ellura, N7)

When practitioners discovered that the move meant reaching a point where there was nothing to rejuvenate, progress to, or motivate the findings showed a realisation that this was the 'end' of the road in academic life. New avenues were sought that replaced and provided the excitement, challenge, intellectual stimulation, recognition, and that valued professional capital or them as people. Avenues and adventures that would fully utilise accumulated knowledge, skills, talents, and accomplishments. However, given their experience of transition in academic life and work, they were no longer advocates for working in higher education, events inside had changed them and altered views.

6.3.4 Group 5 - Pausing and Questioning

The last group (5) had paused and were found to be reflecting, which might wrongly be assumed to be undecided, or lost, or silent but that was not the case. Although these academics from practice were found in the state of making meaning or coming to terms with personal realities, these findings showed practitioners were engaged in personal decision-making and adjusting to realities before jumping to the next move. When ready, individuals knew they would eventually become a stayer or leaver. The process of rebounding had started, but as the future was not entirely clear no move was made but it was being considered and risk assessed. Here practitioners pragmatically identified the next steps but did so more cautiously.

I can either just plod on as I am and become this irrelevant Lecturer ...
I don't just want to plod on as I am, I want to do well and I want to move up. I mean if you come from industry you are not totally

unambitious, you have had success, you have held a job in that profession for so many years and you have done well. I haven't really got the academic [CV] yet and that's the problem. So, you have all these very annoying thoughts, do I go to industry, I am too old, do I want to – not really, do I stay in this, is it a job that I want? Age doesn't matter but there are these other handicaps you have suddenly got. It's not age it's something else. So, at the moment I am not sure. I don't like the situation I am in. I have no idea where to next? I think I am more inclined to stick with it because I chose this for a reason. How I go about improving my position I don't know, I know its research ... I have to work out a strategy ... if you want a career you have to be strategic ... you have to play the system. (Alex, N6)

There was a realisation that 'a system' was in place but one that was not designed for academics from practice or that worked in their favour. As Lucas (2006) identified, academic life was geared towards research, not teaching and not the differences academics from practice brought. The stage of rebounding and evolving put these university academics in a state of limbo until the right strategy or remedy was found and direction decided upon.

Discovering the impact that the evolving transitional experience had was interesting. As such, I gave the findings and stories further consideration which led to identifying the importance of understanding this event. Here, using the same colour coding as Fig.21 above, the picture of the Evolving Transition: Stayers, Leavers and Rationalisers was as Fig. 22 below depicts:

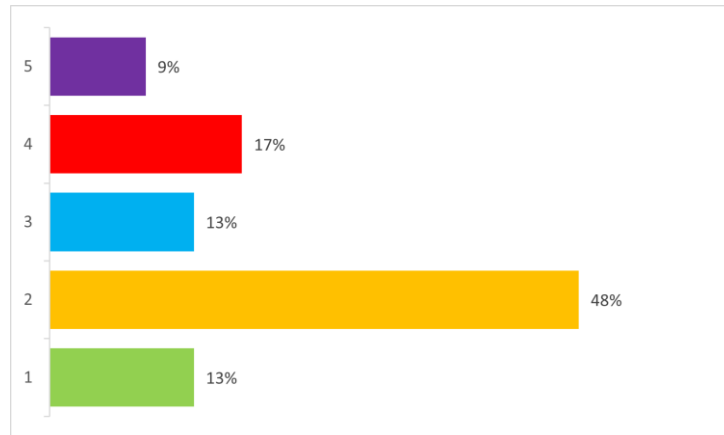


Figure 22. *Evolving Transition: Stayers, Leavers, and Rationalisers*

Here each of the sub-groups (1-5) are seen and the significance of those who are staying, leaving or rationalising understood in another way. Within the early transition cycle 61% of new university academics from practice showed as stayers. Whilst 48% of stayers continued to transition in academic life and work by going deeper, pushing forwards, future planning, career planning and becoming research-focused the other 13% stayed, but as mentioned earlier, the experience had altered the terms as they readjusted priorities and commitments. Of the total leavers, 30%, 13% were found in the process of leaving already. 17% knew they were going to leave or were planning to leave when ready. This was compelling not only because the findings added new insight but because of the way the experience of transition shaped newcomers after they became part of academic life and work. For institutions, and for academic developers, it shows that there is work to be done beyond the point of arrival or an induction process.

6.3.5 Unexciting and Exciting Adventures

Few stayers aspired to administration roles or management posts. None mentioned progression through administration. Where practitioners had mentioned management roles, like Olivia (N19), they were found 'dabbling in the kind of managerial side of the stuff' first before committing or seeking a move. This did not come as a surprise because practitioners were motivated by new challenges and believed that research was what counted as currency.

For me, no aspirations to enter management. None at all. That would mean no teaching or very little teaching and an awful lot of excel spreadsheets ... [the] moaning and whinging because I can't have my holidays next week it doesn't float my boat ... I like where I am. It is finish the PhD and then I want to get on to some sort of research project ... that will be the interesting thing. (Derek, N3)

After a PhD most practitioners sought to continue to engage, then further research. But not all practitioners saw obtaining a PhD or doctoral study as a pathway that would deliver them back a return on the investment needed or the years given. This was not a surprise, but instead highlighted further separation points within this group of university academics.

Where negative experiences damaged psychological contracts, or when practitioners began to understand that what they perceived as value was interpreted differently inside academic life, investing more time, especially from a standing start, was weighed up. The investment of another five to six years did not present an attractive or viable option. Here distances with the institution formed but not with the discipline, subject area or students:

I am not thinking of a PhD, why should I give up months and hours of my life for an organisation that doesn't see me as a person? I mean I would have loved to have done a PhD just for myself. (Ellura, N7)

I do dislike the University as an employer. I have never disliked an employer as much as this one because of their conflicting demands. (Alex, N6)

This was a concerning find from the stories because at the start of transition these newcomers were excited and positive but here the evolving experience had found them, and seven others, becoming dissatisfied and discontented with a system and institution that failed to recognise or reward them equally, as they perceived it. It was of concern that the transitional journey inside academic life risked turning positive newcomers into university academics that might appear as disgruntled when the stories highlighted, they

were merely frustrated by what they been through during the evolving transitional experience in a system that was not fitting.

6.3.6 Returning to Professional Life and Balanced Perspectives

The findings reveal that passage through negative events does not end but it did bring about another unseen risk for professional practitioners. The risk of being out of professional life for too long and the potential for this avenue to be closed to return to:

There was that one moment when I thought 'bloody hell! what have I done?' I thought 'can I turn back the clock? Can I go back?' It was a real dark moment ... I thought 'Oh no, I could never go back to practice' because actually I haven't got the edge anymore [4-5 years in], I am not in the network anymore and I am not in the heat of the moment anymore. (Ellura, N7)

Others adjusted by dealing with turning points or situations pragmatically returning to lessons gained in professional life, as John (N1) highlighted:

There are only two choices in life. Put up and shut up or go somewhere else. The time will come where I have to make that decision. When it does, whether it is a right one or wrong one, it will be the one at the time. (John, N1)

It was heartening to find a positive story from the outside that was a reminder of the importance of keeping an outward facing perspective and not getting blindsided by the events of transition inside academic life. This was brought by Simon (N2) who shared a positive event from his reconnection to the professional field and his return to a previous professional career, having resigned from the academic post:

There were several people yesterday who said 'oh yes but to have [you as a] contact with the university that is something that nobody else in the company has got and it is an extra skill' ... if I put myself back into my 'new old job', my 'new old profession' ... there is definitely something to be said for this. You go [into organisations] and say I am

a Senior Consultant and now I can throw into the conversation ‘oh and I also am a Lecturer in this subject’ [because I do this part-time]. It gives you an added credibility ... It gives you even more credibility in the market. (Simon, N2)

This was an unexpected find because it provided a glimpse of the outside world again, professional life, where one practitioner had returned, going back to the ‘new old job’ (Simon, N2). From this, the importance of retaining a balanced view and continuing to be aware of the available options showed as important, otherwise perspectives of reality might risk being lost during the early experience of transition. Practitioners might risk becoming blinkered to the different career options or realities outside of academic life when in it, surfacing this as an unexpected risk that required managing as part of the transition process. Otherwise, pausing or deciding on options might mean not fully seeing or being aware of what the future could, or does, actually hold.

For most, *Playing* during early transition meant taking hold once again of their own destiny and future occupations to ensure pathways continued to be shaped and continuing employment mobility, intellectual challenges, opportunities in life and job satisfaction achieved. Otherwise, the other emerging risk was that other people would carve or choose the futures of academics from practice for them, as Nathan (N8) emphasised:

Somebody said to me early on, in the middle of my career after I had an astonishingly rapid progression, ... he said ‘well what I realised was that there’s a shortage of talent in this world in almost every field that you discover as you climb up the hierarchy, and if you are fortunate enough to be a competent person, *actually* you can do anything! If you don’t choose for yourself other people will choose for you’ ... [it] set me thinking ‘well ok, I need to steer my own path ... (Nathan, N8)

Practitioners were fortunate to be able to work in professional life and academic life but if they did not choose for themselves, or carve out their own futures, in either field then the risk, as acknowledged here, might be that others would do it for them or that they

might become pigeonholed into a post or role. For all practitioners, it was found to be important that they continued to forge, and steer, their own career pathway not becoming heavily reliant on others or complacent about this when giving their time up to teaching. Individuals, as confirmed here, have a path to walk that is unique (Megginson and Whitaker 2007:6) but one, as this research identifies, that is also influenced by the events of transition to and through academic life.

From the findings, practitioner stories showed transition as transforming these academics from practice by creating new university academics at one level and valuable hybrids at another. However, academics from the professional field were not yet 'the finished product' as there is always more to learn, to do, and to experience as Elena (N4) sums up:

I am very clear in my own mind, I will never be the finished product. I am still learning. But it's a safe and enjoyable learning because I can let the day job tick over. I can't see myself going back into [professional practice] as [a professional practitioner] every day. But I know that if I did for whatever reason that I would be a better [professional] now, knowing what I know now, compared to what I was when I left. Because I have taken a step back from it really. I had the time to think about what makes a good [practitioner] from an educational point of view and I would take all of that with me. (Elena, N4)

In summary, the stories of rebounding and evolving added a different perspective to help understand the experience of transition. Instead of reaching a point of 'stabilization' as Nicholson (1990) claimed might happen these academics were seen sub-dividing into stayers, leavers, and those pausing temporarily to reflect and make further sense of individual situations before moving onwards again. Although this was viewed as the most difficult phase to pass through, and the one where most disillusionment occurred, it was not the end. During phase three, *Playing*, practitioners learned lessons from rebounding and evolving. They came to pick up additional wisdom, reconstruct, and reassemble pathways, develop longer-term survival strategies, give themselves time and space to

think, alter thinking, untangle perceived constraints, and make decisive changes. This continued to be a track they travelled alone mainly supported by family, personal networks, friends, and colleagues on the outside of academic life and disciplinary communities.

6.4 Visualising Phase Three - Playing

Here the phase of the experience of transition was reflected on, unpicked, and conceptualised to create a visualisation of the last stage of the transitional journey, *Playing*. Williams (1999) and (Fig. 8) were used as a theoretical lens enabling comparisons to be made and to build on the early transition framework. The vertical and horizontal axis continue to be used in a similar way to those in earlier chapters. However, here the shape is different because this research added to what is known about the experience of transition and to transition cycles through the stories and findings related to *Playing*.

The phase of *Playing* brings an end point to the Early-Transition Cycle (ETC) however this does not mean that the transition process ended. It indicates only that academics from practice reached the end of early transition because their academic roles continued to evolve as illustrated in Fig. 23:

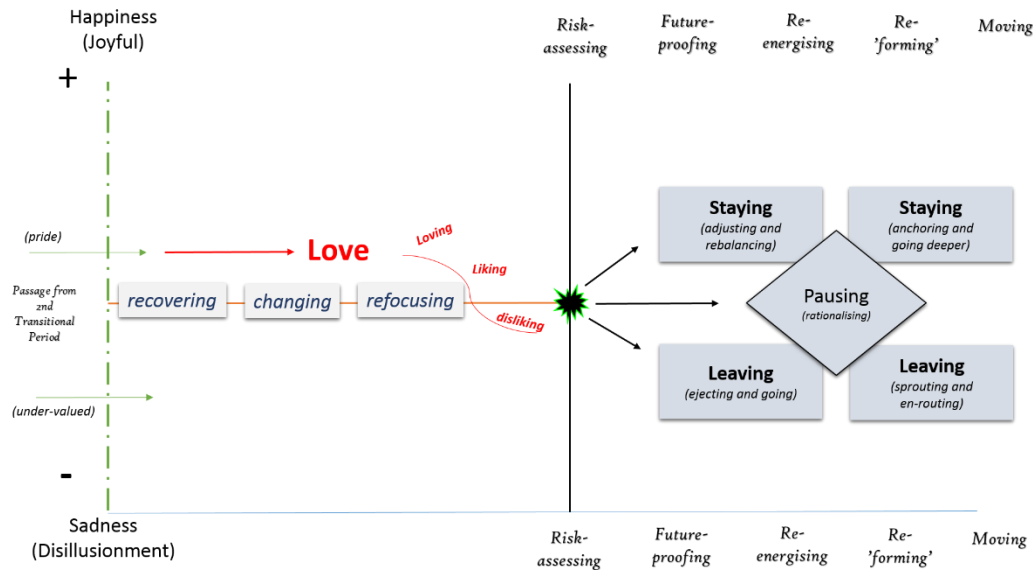


Figure 23. Early-Transition Cycle (Phase Three Playing)

The end phase in which Williams (1999) 'transition cycle' had suggested involved passing through a phase of 're-construction and recovery' leading on from the middle phase where it was considered that a 'crisis' point was likely to be reached. But, as this chapter highlighted, a 'crisis' point was not viewed to be occurring in this research study however a *turning point* (change) did occur during this phase. Here the features that changed things became evident in the shape of the ETC (Fig. 23). But, despite the differences between the groups, the similarities between all groups allow for them to be considered as a homogeneous sample for the purpose of the study of the experience of transition to become university academics from professional practice. Therefore, the results from the interpreted findings led to a model of transition (ETC) that applies to all participants.

The end phase through the conceptualisation of the phases of transition (Fig. 8, Chapter 2) had suggested that it brought about a period of stabilisation; sustained trust, commitment and effectiveness with work and people; a new beginning and development of a new identity, experiences, energy, and a new sense of purpose. Features that eventually would lead to making the career change begin to work and to eventually accepting, letting-go or quitting (Williams 1999). This meant accepting the way things were, letting-go of professional life or identities, or quitting the role by leaving the institution. As found, a period of stabilisation was never reached in the first five years.

In this respect, whilst this research showed that academics from practice were committed to the academic role, to their students and to undertaking meaningful work, the evolving experience and encounters with various realities meant that at times the feeling of 'love' began to alter, turning from loving, to liking or disliking. This was not related to the job role but the institution and the systems used for recognising professional credentials, rewarding teaching, onwards progression, research engagement, and for assuring continuing employment mobility. These systems, certain situations or circumstances brought about a dip to the shape of the ETC as can be seen in Fig. 23. Transition involved recovering, changing, and refocusing but this also led to a stage of additional risk-

assessing; future-proofing; re-energising; re-forming and moving as former practitioners began to divide into camps of stayers, leavers or those rationalising, those who were pausing and deciding before becoming a committed stayer or leaver.

The ending, *Playing*, continued to show that the experience of transition was a personal journey, and it was not linear. In some cases, phases two (Learning) and three (Playing) might run in parallel to this phase adding further complexity. This type of transition process required different types of support mechanisms to be made available and operational at the various points of transition to academic life. It became even clearer that there was a requirement to meet the different needs of a diverse community of university academics from practice for full benefit to be gained from the expertise that practitioners brought to academic life and work. Particularly to prevent discontentment occurring, to manage expectations and to ensure fairness. Also, for appropriate support systems to deliver the requirements as well as ensuring that practitioners were able to achieve their full career potential.

6.5 Chapter Conclusion

As discussed in the first theme, the overriding sense that emerges from the findings related to *Playing* continues to be that of complexity and the varied nature of the early experience of transition for these university academics from practice. It is an emotional journey. The last phase of the early-transition cycle, *Playing*, highlighted the importance of three key themes place and identity, the feeling and realities of falling and adjusting; and the journey through rebounding and evolving. These three themes were found to be critical features of this third transitional phase and showed that passing through the stages of *Playing* were not always fun, positive, or easy for practitioners to do or adjust to. It is during this last phase that these university academics face the realities of the earlier decisions they made and the reality of crossing over from professional life to the academic. This was shown to bring with it times of disillusionment, discontentment, displacement, shock, fear of being stuck or of financial or personal risk, and not knowing what the future holds for them career-wise.

With the first theme of place and identity this was particularly pertinent as the change to status was felt and the difficulty of formulating a 'true' or 'real' academic identity was struggled with. With this came the reality that credentials, profiles, and identities from practice did not count, or have currency, in the same way inside as they did outside of academic life even if the institutions needed the applied experience and expertise. The second theme of falling and adjusting hit some of these university academics from practice harder than others. For those who viewed it as a 'hobby' or who were trialling academic life knowing they could go back, it was not as difficult to adjust to because the options to return remained open. However, for those who stayed for longer than two years the likelihood of being able to return to practice, and to job roles of the same status, became a concern or were diminishing. For those reaching or found passing through the third theme of rebounding and evolving having come across shocks, faced rejection for onward or upwards moves, or where reality of the fall remained, these new university academics were found to be separating and dividing themselves up into three camps; the stayers, the leavers and the pausers who were making up their minds.

Reaching this point in the early transition cycle was not the end and, as this study views it, aspects that brought about the changes were in the main preventable. Doing so, relied on institutions, academic developers and academic communities having adequate support systems and approaches to manage expectations, aid on-boarding, help with academic career management and processes that enabled university academics from practice to start from a stronger position rather than finding themselves at risk a few years into the post. It became clearer that somehow systems supporting transitions from practice to academic needed to be capable of recognising and rewarding those from the applied fields and enabling inside career options and routes to pave the way for academics from practice who wanted to continue to progress in academic life. Not all did, and for those who preferred teaching, again fitting avenues for recognition and reward systems needed to exist. Otherwise, practitioners risked being blindsided by what they did not have 'inside' knowledge about of in the new working environment which would continue to overtake the combination of what they did have if they were not careful. The fact that the experience of transition had created something else, people

who could work between the two worlds of academic life and professional life was an opportunity yet to be harnessed or recognised.

The findings in this chapter have added to what was known about the transition cycles reviewed in Chapter 2, recognising that 'letting go' (Williams 1999) did not begin during the phase of 'reconstruction and recovery' (Williams 1999), but came earlier at different times and with a variety of situations leading practitioners to do this. What resulted was a *turning point* (change) and a threshold crossing that was not returned from.

The next chapter reconceptualises transition and draws together all the phases into a holistic view. It presents a new model termed here as the Early-Transition Cycle (ETC) as an original contribution to knowledge.

Part II

Chapter 7 - Conceptualising Early Transition

'A moment's insight is sometimes worth a life's experience'
– Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr –

7.0 Introduction

This chapter is the last of four drawing together the phases of *Finding*, *Learning* and *Playing* to present a new model, termed here as, the Early-Transition Cycle (ETC). The interpretative process of using Thematic Analysis has enabled this last chapter to conceptualise and explain the early transition phase. The ETC was developed to overcome the problem of there being no existing single model that could be appropriately used to understand, or explain, the experience of professional practitioners making the transition to become university academics or the evolving transitional experience once they had changed careers and were in academic life.

The chapter begins by providing an overview that illustrates the whole experience of transition drawing on the findings from previous chapters. This enables a conceptualisation of the experience of transition to be presented, explained, and briefly discussed. The presentation reconnects with prior transition cycle models and theory showing how the research findings utilise, advance, and build-on from theory but in a different context and through a different perspective. Other models and theories combined earlier into the conceptualised phases of transition (Fig. 8, Chapter 2) are referred to where relevant. This chapter shows where this research advances what was previously known. The presentation of the new model (ETC) demonstrates an original contribution to the body of knowledge and field of academic development.

The chapter addresses the aim of continuing to gain understanding and insights. It closes having offered different stakeholders a new model (ETC) that they can adopt in their own practices and use for future research. It reinforces the point that transition is individual, complex, important to understand, to manage well and to consider from different perspectives to expand what is known about a group of university academics, to recognise their early support needs and requirements.

7.1 Conceptualising the Experience of Early-Transition

The stories marked the start of the creation of a new model. Reflecting on the narratives, unpicking each of the three phases of transition, comparing the findings with the 'transition cycle' provided by earlier models offered by Williams (1999), Bridges (2009),

Nicholson (1990) and the ‘Conceptualising the Phases of Transition’ (Fig. 8, Chapter 2) led to recognising that although each offered a view of transition, the models did not reflect the experience of transition from the perspectives of practitioners or the range of emotions or feelings that also needed to be passed through as part of the transition process. This study has enabled a new model to take shape and be illustrated in this chapter. Its development is considered as an advancement to what we know about the experience of transition from the perspectives of university academics from practice and one that makes a substantial contribution to research.

Throughout this inquiry, the transition process was shown to be a journey and not linear, straightforward, or simple. Instead, it could be pictured as individual, complex, intrinsically linked to, and dependent on, other people or systems. I felt that this journey was best expressed using a conceptual map which led me to developing a substantive-level view of the experience of professional practitioners making the transition to become university academics, and the evolving transitional experience once they had joined academic life and work. A new map termed and presented here as ‘Conceptualising the Early-Transition Experience’, is set out in Fig. 24 below:

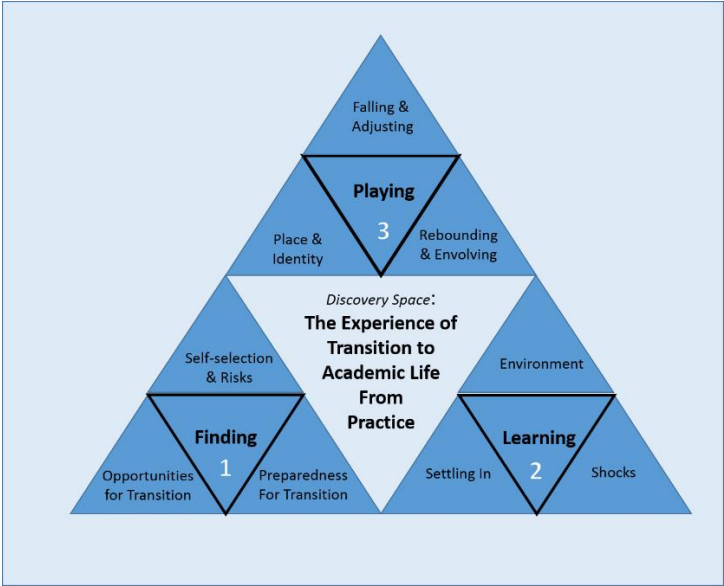


Figure 24. Conceptualising the Early-Transition Experience (University Academics from Professional Practice)

This conceptualisation shows, at the centre of the experience of transition, a space of discovery connected to each of the different phases of *Finding*, *Learning*, and *Playing*. This should not be taken as 'the neutral zone' as Bridges (2009:5) model showed as a middle phase, or as an inactive space, because it would be misleading. This was a central and connecting space that was far from neutral. It was filled with discovery, reflection, sense-making, strategising, carving futures, paving pathways, pausing, and transition activity. Each of the three phases of *Finding*, *Learning* and *Playing* are interconnected to one another requiring a central space for making sense of the new, learning, and for reflection. The *discovery space* was a central feature of early transition depicting a point of decision-making, one where strategies formed and where movement might stall for a while until practitioners were able to take informed action later in the transition process. It was here that practitioners made their own sense of the new world, of academic life and of transition with little or no guidance or route maps for use in practice, as highlighted throughout this thesis.

Previous Chapters, 4-6, discussed in detail the phases of *Finding*, *Learning* and *Playing* so this is not repeated here. However, I recognised that this concept is contextualised to new university academics from professional practice and that other entry routes may share the experience of each of the three phases. It seems reasonable to expect that other types of transitional experiences and moves to academic life from other routes would also experience the phases of *Finding*, *Learning*, and *Playing*. This assumption might be born out through some feedback received here from a peer not from professional practice but a disinterested friend (Appendix 20) who commented that 'this research thinking applies to those becoming academics from research routes as I can recognise where situations, experiences, perceptions, and feelings apply ... do not think or assume that your study is only connecting to those from the professional practice entry route into academic life/careers'. I accept that this study leaves open opportunities for other research to pursue such as alternative entry routes, transition cycles, emotions, and feelings, and models.

From a reflection on the conceptualisation and framing of the early-transition experience as presented and understood earlier in Chapter 2 (Fig. 3) the research here has advanced this understanding and taken what we know further on, as depicted in Fig. 25.

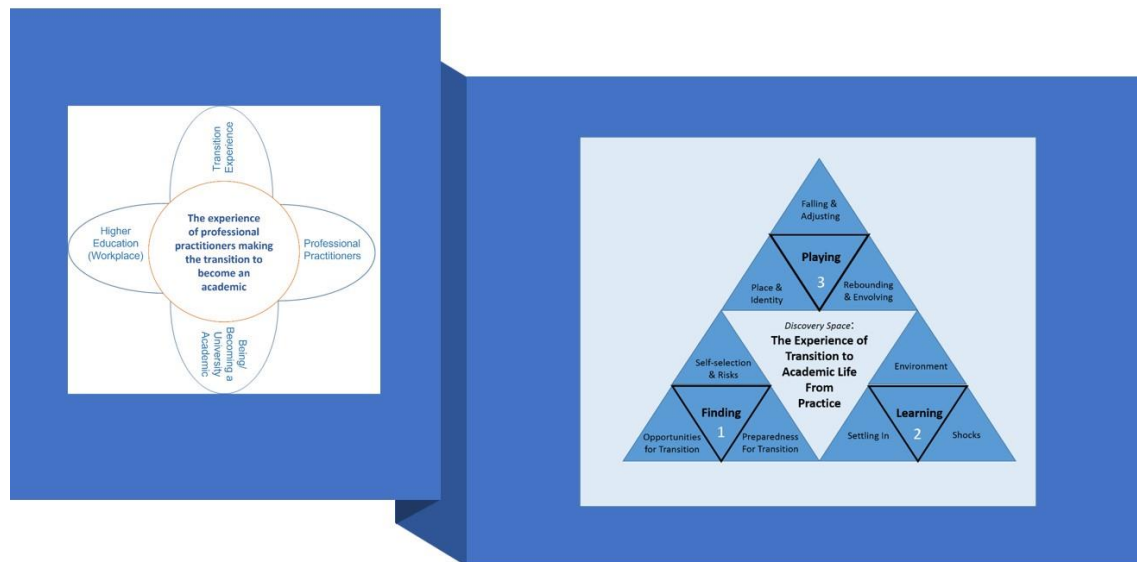


Figure 25. Understanding the Experience of Transition (University Academics from Professional Practice)

From initially considering the research question and framing this, as reminded above, understanding the experience of transition at the end of this inquiry sees it viewed differently as three key phases.

The conceptualisation of the experience of early-transition and the phases visualised and presented in Chapters 4-6 are taken further. Here this has led to combining all three phases of *Finding*, *Learning*, and *Playing* into a whole view of the experience of transition. The journey that is presented next.

7.2 The Early-Transition Cycle (ETC)

By discovering the existence of three phases of transition illustrated as *Finding*, *Learning*, and *Playing*, further understanding has been gained about the experience of transition from the perspectives of practitioners as mentioned. A transition cycle that started

further back in time than previously considered was discovered, conceptualised, and visualised. Combined, the three phases present the holistic view of the ETC, a new model, which can be located in Fig. 26.

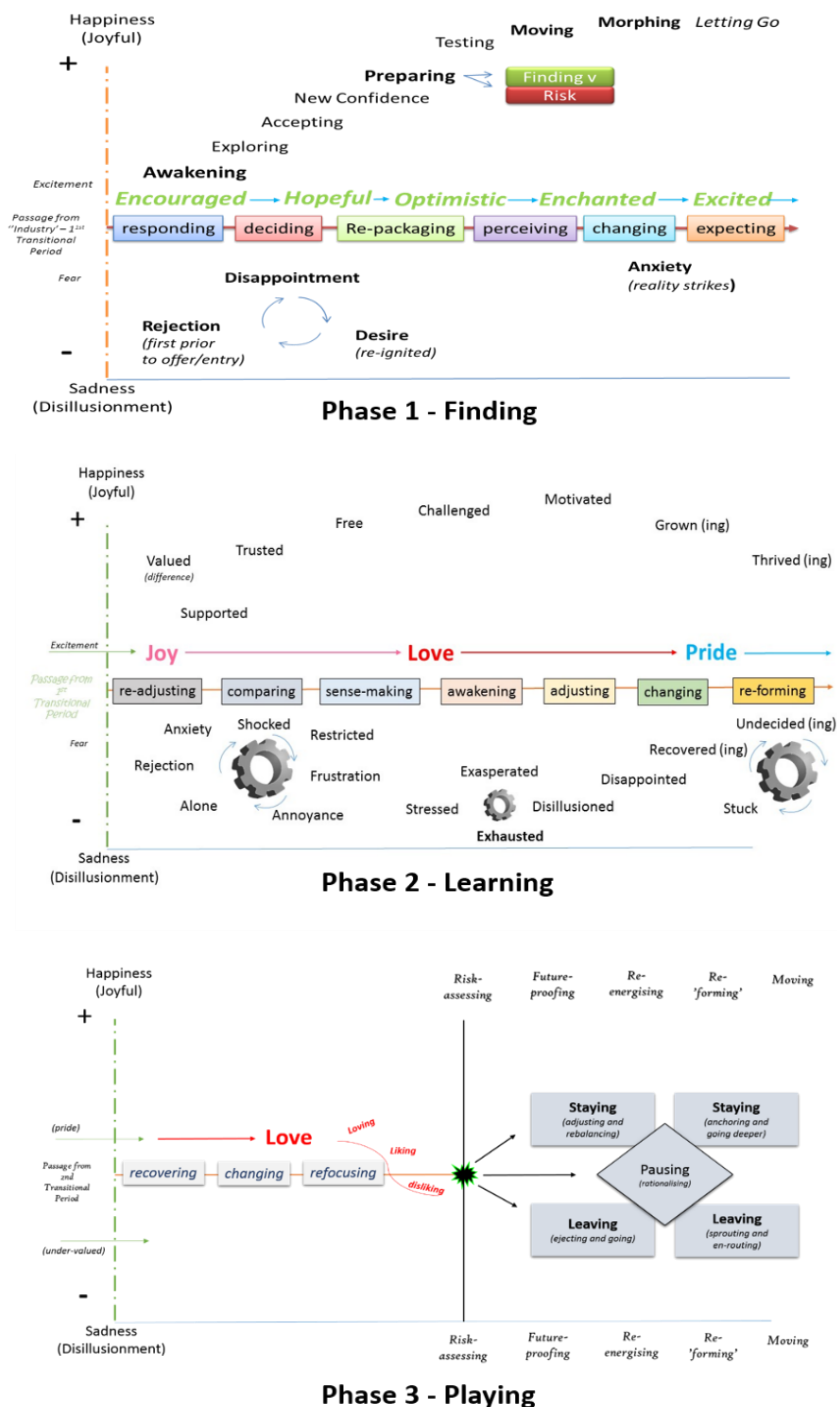


Figure 26. The Early-Transition Cycle (ETC)

This combined view enables the transition journey to be seen conceptually as well as holistically. It is cyclical in that each of these stages needs to be passed through as part of a cycle over the first five years in academic life and work but without an added timeline. Additionally, the ETC has helped develop understanding of a critical and highly informative time for incoming university academics from practice to academic life and careers.

This research assists us understand the importance of transition in context and helps to raise awareness of the importance of understanding transition cycles which sit within the overall process. The ETC has presented a whole view of the early experience so that this can be understood more clearly whilst continuing to argue that the conventional journey into an academic career is via the research route: undertaking a PhD and often post-doctoral research before securing a lecturing position. Implicitly, if not always explicitly, this is the assumed default journey which underpins academic life and career progression. Entering higher education from professional practice is less common. If universities are to fully benefit from the expertise that practitioners bring, and they in turn are to achieve their full career potential, universities need to recognise and support their specific needs and requirements.

7.3 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter completes the presentation of the core findings and demonstrates how this research has taken knowledge in the field of academic development and about early transition 'a small step forwards' (Harrison 2010:34) drawing evidence, terms, and interpretations from perspectives of former practitioners who made a successful transition to become university academics. This study leaves open future threads for research to develop and potentially to enable future work to utilise the ETC in research and practice to take this model forwards or to build-on from it. This chapter has clearly drawn together what is added to the literature of transition through new understandings, insights and a model which is especially relevant to the field of academic development and practices in this field. Following on from this chapter is the final one in this thesis. The chapter that concludes, recommends, and provides a final reflection before closure.

Part III – Final Conclusion: Ending and New Beginnings

Chapter 8a – Concluding the Study and Future Work

‘Change is the end result of true learning’
– *Leo Buscaglia* –

8.0 Introduction

This chapter is the last in the thesis and draws this study to a close through a summary of what has been achieved and by adding understanding to what is already known about the experience of making the transition to become university academics from practice. This thesis concludes by moving ‘the professional discussion’ (Dunleavy 2003:207) onwards, offering recommendations to improve transition practices and experiences, identifying areas for future research, recognising the limitations of this study, and presenting a final reflection.

The chapter is presented in two main sections. The first (8a), discusses the key research findings and the primary contribution to knowledge. In the second section (8b), I provide a personal reflection from the learning experience gained by undertaking this doctoral study.

8.1 Purpose and Context

The study was initially driven by the desire to understand the experience of professional practitioners making the transition to become an academic. Specifically, to gain the perspectives of those who had made the transition within post-1992 higher education institutions in England. The study focused on this primary research question and led to addressing the first area: How can the experience of transition from practice to academic life be better understood?

The second area addressed linked to the research question and another major motivation, which was to gain new insights, and use these to establish potential improvements. This was addressed by asking, and identifying: How can this understanding lead to a better system of integrating the existing academic community and incoming practitioners as a team to deliver a good quality higher education?

The underpinning argument is that the conventional journey into an academic career is via the research route: undertaking a PhD and often post-doctoral research before securing a lecturing position. Implicitly if not always explicitly, this was the assumed default journey which underpins academic life and career progression. Entering higher

education from professional practice is less common. If universities are to fully benefit from the expertise that practitioners bring, and they in turn are to achieve their career potential, universities need to recognise and support their specific needs and requirements.

The focus of this last chapter is to complete the research process and meet the research objectives established at the outset, to:

1. Understand what is already known about the experience of transitioning from professional practice to academic life and the most appropriate way to study this, (Literature review, Chapter 2 and Methodology, Chapter 3)
2. Explore the experience of transitioning from the perspective of practitioners who have already become university academics through this route, (Core findings, Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7).
3. Recommend ways to better integrate incoming practitioners into the existing academic community, and into academic life, in order to deliver the quality higher education demanded as a cohesive team and as required by the changing higher education landscape, (Conclusion, Chapter 8).

8.2 Overview of Research and Claims

As detailed in Chapter 3, the research question directing this study has been addressed by a robust research design and strategy based on an Interpretative framework. The research was formed from a qualitative paradigm and one that employed a narrative (Kim, 2016; Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou. 2013; Savin-Baden and Major. 2013; Cousin, 2009; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) as an appropriate methodology for use in a study of this nature. Stories relating to the experience of transition were collected from twenty-three participants which resulted in the generation of a body of field texts gathered from across eight disciplines and four post-1992 institutions in England.

Interviews were conducted by me as the researcher, tape recorded, transcribed, and verified in line with the Interpretative framework (Chapter 3).

The collected word data was turned through two stages of descriptive analysis using a first-cycle of coding and labelling and a second-cycle of allocating overarching themes and labels. Participants own terms were drawn upon to help develop the set of themes and quotes used in this thesis. Further sense was made of the interpreted themes using conceptual analysis. This led to the relations and patterns found in the data being used in this text: patterns that have given meaning to the experience of transition through the phases of *Finding*, *Learning*, and *Playing*. This led on to this thesis being able to provide a coherent story retold from a robust process of interrogation, feedback, and reflection.

The inquiry was not designed to predict what the experience of transition might be or to anticipate what improvements may be evident. The primary focus was to learn more and gain understanding as well as insights from the stories that academics coming from practice had to share about their transitional experiences, which has been done. As such, new knowledge, insights, and models (ETC) have been contributed to the field, theory, and practice.

8.3 Overview of the Initial Concepts and Key Findings

An overview of the initial concepts and findings is provided by comparing what was understood about the experience of transition to become university academics from practice before and after this research. This enables this section to focus on three key themes located across the whole of the study. The intention is not to repeat but to emphasise important aspects and utilise the findings later in the chapter to identify ways to better integrate incoming practitioners into the existing academic community and life.

Understanding Transition

At the start, when conceptually framing this study, it was understood from the literature that ‘transitions can be awkward ... [and that] the journey from one space to another can range from smooth and seamless to disruptive and disjointed’ (Saldana 2013:187) which this research, having identified the three transition phases of *Finding*, *Learning* and

Playing, is able to confirm. The experience of transition across the three phases was not always 'smooth and seamless' and at points it was found to be 'disruptive and disjointed'. This was particularly evident in relation to the gaps found in the ways in which new academics from practice were supported when joining the existing academic community.

At the start, literature had shown that transition came with a few 'health warnings' and advice ranging from: being 'clear about what [is wanted] from [their] first job' (Grant and Sherrington 2006:11); that transition can involve 'serious hazards and windows of opportunity for growth' (Williams 1999); that individual assets change and 'dwindle' (Megginson and Whitaker 2007:6) if not kept fresh; the need to 'approach academic life with as few illusions as possible' (Grant and Sherrington 2016:8) and the 'game in academic life' (Lucas 2006) which when combined is complex for new entrants into the field of teaching to fully understand, as this research found. Making the transition to academic life from professional life is not easy and practitioners arriving, initially as lecturers, did have 'a very difficult mountain to climb' (Boden, Epstein and Kenway 2005:28) but not all wanted to engage in all aspects of academic work, as findings concluded. This research showed that the transition was made more difficult when individuals were thrown in at the 'deep end' without adequate guidance and fitting support mechanisms to enable effective and quick transitions into academic life and careers. Harder still when established systems could not understand or translate the value of the applied field or professional life into the contexts of academic life and careers making a smooth transition difficult, lengthy, disjointed, or impossible.

Transition was conceptualised at the start as 'a process by which people unplug from an old world and plug into a new world' (Chapter 1, Bridges 2009:5) but research showed the reality was far detached from this notion and that in fact it is a complex, varied, individual, and intricate process to understand. Becoming a university academic from practice, as the research findings revealed, did not mean unplugging from professional life entirely because elements of this world had to be transferred and taken to academic life, used, and passed on to future generations. Transition did not mean stepping across from one world of work to another. It was not simply the case of practitioners plugging

themselves in elsewhere because professional credentials, identities, expertise, experiences, reputations, professional capital, and applied knowledge did not readily transfer across. Instead, transition involved starting again in a new field and in a new career.

A substantial amount of time, energy, and learning was required to become established again or to understand the world that had been transitioned into. This research showed the process to include crossing a professional border, and in effect rather than stepping across from professional life to academic life, the transitional journey resulted in a sense of stepping downwards, being at the bottom of the career ladder again. Transition to academic life involved becoming an apprentice or novice in another field, as well as being a needed expert from the applied field, which was an odd mix to contend with and a personal adjustment to make. An insight that prior work had not considered as a feature of transition cycles in the way that this research does.

Transition Phases, Features and Cycles

Academics from practice crossed over to 'do' academic work, to become university lecturers and to be part of the academic community working in their associated disciplinary fields. Fields that connected subjects from professional life with those in academic life. But as this research found getting the new job was not the 'life event' (Williams 1999) that triggered the start of the early-transition cycle. The start was discovered further back in the transition process because practitioners first had to be trained, socialised, and serve time in the professional field, through their primary careers, before the move to academic life and the start of another career could be 'triggered'. However, service in professional life did not fully prepare individuals for academic life or readiness to carve out an academic career, as this research confirmed. Therefore, the initial phase of 'preparation' (Nicholson 1990) began partially on arrival. But once inside academic life it was impossible to catch-up quickly on the stages that had been missed by entering academic life via the professional route and not the more conventional route of research.

Even after four to five years in post, none of the academics had found 'stabilisation' (Nicholson 1990). Through the literature this was identified as a point of 'sustained trust, commitment and effectiveness with tasks and people' (Nicholson 1990) that reached across all realms of academic work and into developing academic careers. The main barrier identified in this study, the areas which prevented this from occurring during phase two and three, was the time and energy consumed by teaching, administration, little guided support, the lack of information, and transition processes that were not adequate, or appropriate, for this community of academics. As this research found, it was impossible for these new entrants to get started on a second strand of academic work other than teaching and learning, or to carve out their academic career direction early-on, when mechanisms provided for transition relied on self-discovery, self-direction, knowledge, and colleagues. Without adequate knowledge transfer or the right flow of information being given by institutions, or more widely in the academic community through related literature designed for academics from practice, these newcomers had to find their own way, often alone, unsupported and during a time when unprecedented change within higher education ran parallel to the move they were making.

The early-transition cycle did not mirror any of the existing models nor did it map neatly into the conceptualisation of the combined phases of transition (Fig. 8, Chapter 2) combined as a start, middle, and end point. Although some features noted in the literature did resonate, these did not match entirely or occur in the same order as earlier models suggested. Additional features not previously identified were discovered and added to the early-transition cycle from practitioners stories as discussed in detail in Chapters 4-7. The purpose here is not to repeat what has already been presented but to draw from the new learning and insights. Although the research confirmed three phases existed, they were viewed differently. Practitioners stories and terms enabled the three phases to be understood as *Finding, Learning, and Playing*.

Academics from practice passed through sets of features, emotions, feelings, risks, and struggles in their own time and when they were ready to do so. Individuals had their own

personal and unique distance to travel as they made the move, transitioned in academic life, and created longer-term careers or future pathways as part of their life's course. As the research showed, the transition process of 'letting go' (Bridges 1995) on arrival or 'letting go' (Williams 1999) towards the end did not happen entirely. In fact, during early transition it would not be safe to do so until a point of security and stabilisation was reached but this presented another problem. One that related to time because as this research shows, and previous studies did not take this into account, time was in short supply and as such a valuable, and important feature, across all the phases of transition. Time was limited, diminishing, at risk of being misspent or not correctly invested during all the early-transition phases of *Finding*, *Learning*, and *Playing*, and during the critical years of developing a pathway for a successful academic career from the outset.

The pre-arrival time, the *Finding* phase, was recognised through this research as a place of initial power: one where the ball was in the practitioners court when reconsidering the metaphor of the 'game' (Lucas 2006) of academic life. During this time, practitioners could decide to leave primary careers and make the move. It was a time when higher education needed their applied knowledge, expertise and experiences, and gateways were opened to enable newcomers to cross-over from the applied field to academic life. However, the longer newcomers remained inside academic life doing one aspect of academic work it was risky because as time (and years) moved on practitioners became more distant from their past, professional life.

This meant that returning to the professional field might be more difficult or impossible but subject area knowledge did not fade or weaken. This research identified risks as time elapsed and academic profiles, reputations or identities were not fully formed. The longer practitioners remained evolving in academic life, the more distant individuals became from former life and the ability to return to professional careers and their career options inside and outside of academic life were reduced rather than expanded by the move. As such, this research found that within transition there was a 'return-by date' that could expire. One that impacted on the ability of practitioners to go back into professional life

and work or into a professional career at the same level as the one they moved from. This was an important aspect of transition that did not feature in prior models.

Lacking and Missing

From the research, one of the problems surfacing was the lack of information provided by higher education institutions which, from practitioners stories, appeared to be doing little to assist with the move, on-boarding, the development of academic careers or ensuring that the transition process was done well, quickly, and smoothly. This is not to say that nothing was happening. In one particular institution, an induction for new academics to the field of teaching was provided and line managers involved in the process, but this was not consistent across institutions. Institutions relied heavily on PgCert programmes to provide newcomers with the information and guidance needed but this was not tailored. Prior to this study, it was already known that the system was 'notorious for haphazardly inducting or orientating new academic staff' (Knight 2002:48) as confirmed here, and whilst practitioners placed a heavy reliance on their 'new employer' passing on information, institutions were also relying heavily on the informal mechanisms, such as other academic staff members, to carry out that activity for them.

Most academic colleagues made a substantial difference and outside of academic life practitioners were shown to receive support for transition from an array of people who pushed them on, encouraged, and helped make crossing over possible. However, inside academic life practitioners, as this research showed, did need to 'fit into a system' (Becker and Denicolo 2013:2) that was not geared towards them. As identified by previous studies, and confirmed in this research, 'much less attention [was] paid to [their] individual needs' (Becker and Denicolo 2013:2), and these needs did contrast with the training, socialisation and academic career systems related to the research route. Finding an early footing was difficult as was getting off to the *right* start without the right information, knowledge, mentoring, and guidance.

Institutions were not prepared for the arrival of university academics from practice, or to support the evolving transitional journey, and practitioners stories confirmed that institutions were 'do[ing] little for themselves' (Blackwell and Blackmore 2003:20) in

relation to catering for the transition needs of a diverse academic workforce. Nor were they gaining full benefit from the talent and knowledge that this new group of academic staff brought. Transition systems were found lacking in the support provided during pre-arrival and this continued through the phases of *Learning* and *Playing* (e.g. progression, reward and recognising the value of the applied professional field). This is not viewed negatively but seen as an opportunity to enhance practice, level 'playing' fields, and create transition systems and on-boarding processes that are fit for purpose. Transition systems and on-boarding processes specifically designed to equip these new entrants with the knowledge and information required upfront to provide a much stronger start in academic life, and for the development of an academic career. Knowledge and information was needed beforehand, and during the evolving experience of transition, so that the more negative aspects of transition could be prevented or minimised.

None of the practitioners mentioned role models or being connected with role models who had become academics from practice, and it was evident that, at each phase of the early-transition cycle, careers advice, and adequate mentoring was lacking.

8.4 Limitations of the Study

The successful completion of this study has made it possible to gain a better understanding of the experience of transition. From the start, the risks to credibility and validity were assessed and steps taken to reduce threats. Great care was taken during the processes of research design, decision-making, and interpretation supported by ongoing reflection, wakefulness, peer review, peer scrutiny, and member checking. However, it is acknowledged that every kind of research is likely to have its own limitations in one shape or form and this study is no different. The limitations of this study are related to the conditions that restrict, constrain, or impact the overall findings or conclusion:

- Interviewing twenty-three participants from across four institutions and eight disciplines provided a good sample from the population and a view that was not isolated to one institution or one discipline. However, it is recognised that there are more than four post-1992 institutions in the UK. There are other disciplines,

professional routes, and different professional practitioners that it was not possible to include in this inquiry. The range and group of academic peers selected enabled findings and understanding to be enriched however, it is acknowledged that there are more and that this might add further insight and understanding. As such, an opportunity for future studies is presented to build-on from this research or to view the experience of transition from another angle or category of staff such as researchers, professional services, module leaders, programme managers, academic managers, etc., within academic life.

- Time was a constraint of this study, connected to the part-time doctoral research process and although this research was completed within the allocated period, it is recognised that additional benefits, insights, and understanding might be returned from a longitudinal study. I recognise that I would be able to take this line of inquiry forward by returning to the participants to trace where the experience of transition has led to later in their careers. The exploration of the experience of transition can adopt the Early-Transition Cycle (ETC) to compare, contrast, and develop understanding.
- It is acknowledged that there are other researchers, people, approaches, and methodologies than can be drawn together to advance knowledge about transitional experiences in other ways. This opportunity remains open for future research to pursue studies focused on understanding more about the experiences of transition and the development of theoretical lenses that can be used to view 'transition cycles' to academic life and careers through. These do not necessarily need to be limited to higher education either and have the potential to expand into the other complementary fields.
- The study does not claim that it is generalisable across the population or within the era that the inquiry was undertaken recognising that it provides a snapshot of a group of people working in post-1992 institutions at a certain point of time. This

is to be expected, but in considering the restriction of the era leads to recognising that this research was created and conducted at a point in history that was prior to the full launch of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), and the move to raise the importance of teaching up the agenda in the field of higher education. This opens the space for future research to compare and contrast the different eras in higher education. It would be interesting to discover and understand the changes brought, and the impact that these have, on the experience of transition to university academic from practice post TEF.

Whilst there are limitations, these aspects of this study are also seen as opportunities on which to develop future research and inform practice.

8.5 Implications

The results of this study have implications for practice, theory, policy, and change across a range of stakeholders involved in the experience of transition during the early-transition years as well as for the field of academic development and professional practitioners. The argument continues for raising awareness of the importance of transition and the implications on the early years of academic life and career development. The results show that changes are required to ensure transitions to academic life from professional life are understood, managed, done well, and that both practitioners, and institutions, gain full and mutual benefit from what is brought about by the merger of people and knowledge. Therefore, this study continues to support the underpinning argument that the conventional journey into an academic career is via the research route: undertaking a PhD and often post-doctoral research before securing a lecturing position. Implicitly if not always explicitly, this is the assumed default journey which underpins academic life and career progression. Entering higher education from professional practice is less common. If universities are to fully benefit from the expertise that practitioners bring, and they in turn are to achieve their career potential, universities need to recognise and support their specific needs and requirements. This understanding required a closer consideration of the various levels and stakeholders involved in the transition process.

At a practical level, and outside of this group here, there are academics from practice who will be currently undergoing transition in academic life passing through the phases of *Learning* and *Playing*. A group where the results of this study may help fill in the knowledge gaps and inform transition systems such as on-boarding, mentoring, professional development, progression, career development, and staff retention during this critical transitional period. Additionally, there will be practitioners who will still be working in professional life and potentially considering making the move to academic life who the results of this study may also benefit during the phase of *Finding*. The implications are that this group of aspiring academics have the opportunity to gain knowledge, information, and understanding from these results to help prepare in advance, assess risks, and use to develop expectations of academic life, and their ongoing career paths in academic life, before arrival.

At an institutional level, and in the field of academic development, this research provides the opportunity for those employing and developing academics from practice to be better prepared and ready for the arrival, and onward transition, of newcomers as they move through the phases shown in the Early-Transition Cycle (ETC). The implications of the study are that institutions and academic developers are provided with understandings and insights into what is missing, lacking, preventable, and problematic. In this regard, the provision of effective and efficient transitions from professional life to the fullness of academic life and careers can be enhanced, supported, mentored, and managed well. Additionally, the opportunity is presented to reduce the risk of losing the 'difference' and 'value' brought in by practitioners by having in place appropriate support systems that utilise this new knowledge, skills, talents, expertise, and experience to advance the service provided by higher education through what has been merged. There is an opportunity to bring together the diverse academic communities, from different entry routes, to form cohesive teams that draw the best of both worlds together, the fields of professional practice and scientific practice, and make stronger use of the joint intellect and practices.

At an organisational level, which encompasses the sector and the field of higher education, the implications of the results might go somewhere towards helping with the larger problems even if it is a small-scale contribution especially during a time when teaching excellence moves up the agenda. Although it is not clear how, or where, the 'voice' of new entrants to academic life from practice is being heard the results show a group of people who value and 'love' teaching in higher education. There is a passion and energy to be captured that might otherwise go amiss and there is advice to be gleaned from experts from the applied field. The results of this study might aid developments as systems are considered that attempt to level the playing fields between research practice and teaching practice, recognising that teaching is not necessarily the 'poor relation' based on the value generated through income, the legacy this work leaves, and the reach it has across the world and into future generations.

8.6 Summary of Primary Contribution and Claims

As set out in Chapter 3, this study was guided by the criteria of 'truth and relevance' (Seale 1999:47) and a range of respected validation strategies which have been applied during interpretation and the production of this thesis. I do not claim that only 'one truth' exists, nor did this inquiry set out to do this, the focus was on gaining understanding and insight. Therefore, this research does not claim that the findings and interpretations are 'the only possibility' (Chase 2011:434). It does claim to be a 'viable interpretation' (Chase 2011:424) and one that is grounded in, and drawn from, the stories and experiences of academics who have directly undergone the experience of transition for themselves.

As a result of the combination of theory and practice, this thesis is capable of outlining the contribution made to these two parts. Firstly, in relation to theory and the advancement of knowledge this research claims to have made a substantial contribution through the:

- Identification of a prior transitional stage within the process of transition adding to the concept of 'transition cycles' provided by Nicholson (1990), Williams (1999) and Bridges (2009) and by placing and using this prior model in a new context.

The context of academic life and academics from practice making the transition to a new role or as a career change.

- Addition of a new model developed from the research findings conceptualising the experience of transition as three key phases of *Finding*, *Learning*, and *Playing* and terming this new model as Early Transition Cycle (ETC).
- Addition to the discourse related to becoming new university academics from practice and taking this a step further to view the evolving transitional experience once inside the field of higher education and as part of academic life.
- Provision of future research opportunities by leaving behind several research threads that build-on from this study, to utilise the Early-Transition Cycle (ETC) in practice and ideas where the body of knowledge can be built-up by continuing to study the experiences of transition to, through, and after academic life. This is not limited only to the professional route but opens for other incoming, onward, or upward avenues to be considered.

In relation to practice, this research outlines the substantial contribution made through identifying the:

- Implications of transition systems geared towards the more conventional route, research, and the risk of mismatching and misfitting support mechanisms for academics from practice relying on employing institutions to equip them with the knowledge needed on arrival or for the development of academic careers early in the transition process.
- Ways in which the risks, and costs, associated with transition can be better supported, managed, understood, issues prevented, and unnecessarily elongated learning curves shortened by a provision of fitting systems and approaches throughout each phase of transition, and as an overall process supporting the move from professional life to academic life.

- Need for practice and systems of knowledge transfer to join academic communities, new and existing, as groups or cohesive teams to deliver quality higher education across the realms of academic work especially during the current climate and the competitive landscape post-1992's universities operate in. The fullness of this strength, competitive advantage, and asset has not yet been fully recognised or realised nor the full benefit of the merger of the professional and the academic been understood.

It is considered that this research is likely to benefit not only university academics, aspiring practitioners, and the institutions engaging this community, but also other stakeholders involved in the transition process. Particularly, educational researchers, academic developers, line managers inducting and supporting new entrants, academic careers advisors, and those responsible for ensuring transitions to academic life and work are successful and well done. Although primarily the research relates to the field of academic development, other complementary fields associated with understanding human transition, human endeavours, and career change are likely to find this research of interest and of value. Particularly, those interested in transitions to career changes, the field of higher education, occupational life cycles, and career life cycles. The advancement of knowledge in relation to transition cycles also has the potential to add new thinking, and views, to complementary fields such as Organisation Development, Human Resource Management, Business Management, Transition Psychology, and Occupational Psychology.

The findings are two-fold benefiting the advancement of knowledge in relation to theory and practice. It is through this endeavour and research output that this thesis ends claiming an original contribution to the field of academic development as part of a doctoral study.

8.7 Further Work and Future Research

There remains scope for further research in the field to raise awareness of transition and to develop knowledge. It is acknowledged here that a longitudinal study could be

developed from the data gathered in this research and that various research threads are identified but also research threads remain open for others, and areas considered worthy of further research to:

- Build-on from the findings of the Early-Transition Cycle (ETC) using this new model to view early transition in different contexts within academic life, work, and stages of transition. For example, to progress what is known about the middle or later phases of transition or after academic life. This is considered beneficial to enable the whole experience of transition to be understood, practices improved, and research in this area and field expanded.
- Build-on from this research and to view the experience of transition from another angle or category of staff such as researchers, professional services, module leaders, programme managers, etc., within academic life. Additionally, I can follow up this line of inquiry by undertaking a longitudinal study developed out of the data from these research findings.
- Improve the existing information and knowledge made available to this academic community to enhance what is lacking in careers advice, handbooks, and guidance. Additionally, provide advice on how to get started in research or management tracks, how to create meaningful academic identities and reputations, how to manage a successful academic career, and where life after academic work can, or does, lead to as a 'hybrid' from a range of different routes with the benefit of accumulated knowledge and experiences, or as an early leaver.
- Follow-up the evolving transitional experiences of those who pursued doctoral studies, research, or management avenues. This might extend to looking at other types of transitional experiences such as module leadership, programme management, dual tracks of research-teaching, dual tracks of teaching-management and academics from practice who have gone on to be readers or professors.

- Undertake comparative studies between the pre and post Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) years and/or consider the experience of transition within the contexts of pre and post 1992 periods of higher education.
- Follow-up on the reflections and overview of interconnectedness surfacing during Chapter 7 where research threads are left open to explore Academic Habitus (Lucas 2006) as part of advancing knowledge in relation to the experience of transition to university academics and academic life.
- Build-on from this research in relation to emotions, emotions at work, and emotional labour as part of the experience of transition to further expand upon what is known and the impact of transition.

8.8 Further Work and Recommendations for Enhancing Practice

There remains scope to improve practices, transition support systems, and policies which impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of transition to academic life and careers from routes outside of research and study. This enables recommendations to be drawn from the findings and the identification of areas considered to be of value to those seeking to improve or support the early-transition phase:

- Use findings and results of this thesis to raise the awareness of the importance of transition across a range of practices, individuals, and communities. For example, aspiring academics, academics in transition during the early-transition cycle, line managers, institutions, and the sector of higher education.
- Use findings to create and build transition systems, on-boarding processes, career guidance and relevant policies that are fit for the purpose of supporting the transition of new academics from different entry routes, and that cater for a diverse community of academics. Transition systems that have in-built support,

and guidance, processes for pre-arrival, arrival, and for the evolving transition process aligned to the phases of *Finding, Learning, and Playing*.

- Review policies and procedures in relation to recruitment, progression, reward, recognition, and careers ensuring that the playing field is levelled between those entering via the 'professional route' and other inward routes.
- Ensure managers are trained and aware of the importance of transition and understand the various ways they can support new academics from practice as these new entrants pass through the three different phases of transition. This requires the right community of managers to be trained and developed as mentors and role models. Those knowledgeable and capable of supporting effective transitions to academic life and the formation of academic careers for newcomers from the professional route.
- Ensure a community of role models, academics from practice who have already successfully transitioned into academic life and formed successful academic careers, are provided on arrival as part of the support mechanisms for transition. This needs to be combined with other successful academic role models from research or management routes who are trained and capable of providing the right help, guidance, and advice to mentor these new academics from the outset and throughout their careers.
- Ensure practitioners are trained or made aware of how to prepare for the move to academic life, the formation of academic careers, and the transition experience early on to include what to expect from academic life, ongoing careers, risks, managing expectations, and the importance of creating an academic identity and reputation. For those who do not choose to pursue research activity, or who may choose to select another realm of academic work in conjunction with teaching, create other career options for this community that enables them to be recognised, rewarded, promoted, and valued.

- Institutions should not place reliance on informal systems to provide newcomers with the information and knowledge needed to get started or for a successful transition but have in place appropriate transition systems and processes that are fitting and well designed to deal with incoming transitions that evolve. Transition systems to academic life, work, and careers that are relevant and adequate for all academic staff regardless of the entry route.

8.9 Concluding Remark and Comments

The thesis concludes having reported back on a research project that spanned over six years and involved a range of people from across a variety of disciplines and four institutions. People who had a varied, complex, individual, and collective story to share about their experience of transition from professional life to academic life during an early-transition phase. This research makes a significant contribution to the body of knowledge about the experiences of transition during the early-years and transition cycles linked to new roles and career changers. The benefits of this study extend to all stakeholders, and other interested parties, depending on their relationship with the topic as well as their desire to continue to work towards enhancing the quality and service provided by higher education. Additional benefit was found from the feedback provided by participants highlighting that engagement and sharing stories was a reflective process. One that was cathartic and considered valuable at the point it occurred. The full potential of this study has yet to be explored, realised, and the implications for practice, policy, theory, and transition reflected and acted upon by a range of stakeholders acting as a cohesive team.

During the introduction to the study, it was noted that ‘there is a time for departure even when there’s no certain place to go’ (Tennessee Williams). At the end, the findings along with the passage of time, helps us to recognise that ‘there is nothing constant except change’ (Heraclitus c.500 BC) in the world of work. Transitional experiences appear to be another form of constant in the lives of people, workplaces, institutions, and the field of higher education. Each in their own way move from one way of being, doing or thinking to another, enabling this study to end on a hopeful and positive note as the next phase

of transition begins and changes are made by those interested not only in this topic, but in making a real difference to valuable work through practice, research, policy, and joint human endeavours.

This thesis has concluded a timely and relevant inquiry having achieved the research aims and objectives, enabled a better understanding of the experience of transition, and offered recommendations to improve, and support, the experience of university academics from professional practice as they become part of academic life and work.

Part III

Chapter 8b – Final Reflection: The Doctoral Learning Experience

'I am still learning'
– *Michelangelo* -

Final Reflection: The Doctoral Learning Experience

This section completes this chapter, and the thesis, by presenting my personal reflection gained from the doctoral learning experience and through undertaking this study. The benefits of this research and personal development process are recognised not only in further developing my knowledge and practice relating to research, but also furthering self-knowledge as part of this endeavour. I acknowledge that I could not have reached this point without the valuable feedback provided by my Director of Studies, supervisory team, critical friends, disinterested peers, and academic colleagues over the last seven years. This has added value to a PhD study that followed the more traditional model provided by my institution.

My research journey has taken me on a voyage that I am very glad to have been able to do and to be part of. A journey which has resulted in me being changed and transformed through gaining a deeper understanding and appreciation of the experience of transition to academic life from professional practice and the qualitative research process. Here I draw from this learning experience significant areas linked to this study as well as to my own development as an academic and researcher who through the doctoral study was further 'trained' to create and complete an independent study at a higher level of research than I had previously attained.

I begin by acknowledging that my own transitional journey into academic life, and an academic career, led from professional practice, like those in my study, but since then the evolving transitional experience when part of academic life has taken me along different pathways that do not mirror the conventional route, that of completing a doctorate and using this to secure an academic post and career. I am completing this doctoral study after I had secured an academic post, spent time in academic life working and later in years. In relation to this study, my own transitional journey saw me deciding to continue to evolve in academic life and to develop my academic practice by undertaking a PhD. I am glad that I did this because the learning experience has helped me to understand that a PhD study is a 'journey' and that it should not mistakenly be considered, or misinterpreted, as a 'project'. I appreciate that unless a person has been

through this direct experience for themselves it is very difficult, if not impossible, to fully understand, to know or to express to others what the actual change(s) or value will be. It is a transition process and having undergone it I take significant areas of learning and insights with me as shared below:

- When designing and framing the inquiry, I had not first considered using Narrative as a methodology to study transition experiences as part of a qualitative study. It was here that I found the opportunity to do so. Not only did I discover that this was a useful and relevant methodology to understand the experiences of transition, but I began to realise that there was no existing 'blueprint' that could be taken and applied. Instead, I discovered that narrative research involved creating a study that meant the choices and framing emerged at each level of the research process. Narrative, as a methodology, is one I would use again in my research practice. I appreciate now that this can be combined with theoretical lenses through which experiences can be viewed, appreciated, and understanding gained.
- Considering the transition to an academic career led to an appreciation not only of practitioners points of view, but also it was apparent that other entry routes into academic life had their own issues and struggles to contend with. Learning about other entry routes to academic life, work, and careers as part of this process has helped me to consider the academic community and my peers more widely, particularly those from the research route. As a result, I can see more clearly the importance of research in the context of developing academic careers and the ways that academics need to be competent in all areas of academic work, but also the pressures.
- It became evident that there were key choices and decisions to make when forming an academic career based on the shape this would take: research-teaching; research-administration; research-consultancy (or professional practice); or research only. It became clearer that academic careers are rarely

founded based on teaching or supervision alone. As an academic developer this discovery opened the opportunity for me to take this forward to enhance the current practices used to support the transition from professional life to academic life. Also, to build on from what is known in this area through my own academic practice and research.

- Identity, particularly academic identity, and researcher identity emerged as interesting and topical research areas during this learning experience. I found identity interesting because from the stories relating to academic and professional identities it was apparent that *identity* was an important part of transition and knowing how to transfer and merge identities as part of a career move and life course. Academic identities such as: human scientist; thinker; researcher; constructor of new knowledge; doctor; writer; author; university scholar; postdoctoral student; theorist; qualitative researcher; social scientist, social realist, pragmatist, academic citizen; supervisor; and so on in addition to identities connected to academic citizenship.

It became evident that an academic emerging from a doctoral learning experience must be very clear about their own research, teaching, and academic identity. Also, rather than being too wide an academic identity needs to be narrowed to an area of specialism or expertise in the scientific, disciplinary, or pedagogical field. As I heard through this study, it is not possible to be 'excellent at every aspect of academic work or to do everything in academic life' (John N1) and therefore, as I come to the end of this journey, it is necessary for me to revisit my own academic and research profile, to update this, and to make my own researcher identity clearer and more focused based on the learning and focus I take forwards.

- I am glad that during my transitional experience and life course that I decided to commit to pursuing a doctoral study. Even though I recognise that I did this later in life and as a part-time student who is working full-time as an academic in the field of academic development. For me, it was a worthwhile endeavour but also

a substantial investment. At times, the journey has been frustrating, challenging, and an experience that in the end has resulted in a better appreciation of academic life and other academics who have completed doctoral study. I appreciate also that a doctoral study and becoming a researcher, and academic, runs alongside a personal life that involves other people, health, caring responsibilities, and the changing agenda within the field of higher education. Undertaking a doctoral study is a complex journey, an adventure where I entered initially into the unknown but an experience that has reshaped me through the process.

- The importance of having the right supervisor as a trainer, mentor, and guide is paramount. A community of supporters is essential. Time at the end to stand back from the experience, to allow for soak time, and reflection is an essential part of the learning. Through this, I have come to recognise and appreciate more the fact that I am already a university academic and part of an academic community that is wider than my own institution or department, and part of academic life. I am now able to identify as an Academic Developer, Social Realist and Pragmatist.
- This study has helped me to see the other side by understanding better my academic colleagues who have not entered academic life and work through the professional route or who have not had the exposure to a professional world, and career, outside of academia. As a result, I feel that this learning experience brings me closer to my academic peers from professional routes and research routes. As an academic developer and educational researcher this study enables me to support each of these academic communities through my current practice, research, and experiences. Also, institutions engaging different types of new academic staff.

Reaching the end of the doctoral learning experience and the end of my thesis, traditionally would mean that the next step leads to becoming a postdoctoral student.

The place to start carving an academic career from and to enter academic life for the long haul. But this is not my journey. Mine is very different and it does feel strange to transition towards an ending, and a letting go, before a new beginning can start. The journey I came to understand by learning about the transition process during this study. For me, it is not quite an ending as my intention is to continue to develop the body of knowledge in this field, the field of research related to academic development and higher education. Also, to lead research projects that help achieve this, to secure research funding and to use my academic endeavours to continue to develop, guide, and contribute to academic life by bringing on future generations of academics regardless of their entry route, and through raising the awareness of the importance of transition.

I, like the stories I have heard, know that I am not the 'finished product' (Elena, N4), nobody is. As I see it, transition and learning experiences continue throughout an entire life, in the communities and societies we are part of. Research makes this process, and living one's life, intellectually challenging, stimulating, and a human endeavour that is worthwhile continuing to sustain. The different thresholds I crossed having now completed the doctoral learning experience are invaluable and transforming. Thresholds, I am highly unlikely to return to again in academic life or more generally in life. It is on this acknowledgement that I end this thesis leaving open avenues for others to take up or follow on from.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 – Ethics Approval Sheet (P13808)

REGISTRY RESEARCH UNIT ETHICS REVIEW FEEDBACK FORM

(Review feedback should be completed within 10 working days)

Name of applicant: Louise Wilson

Faculty/School/Department: [Human Resources] Staff Development

Research project title: PhD Thesis - From Practitioner to University Lecturer ...

Comments by the reviewer

1. Evaluation of the ethics of the proposal:

Detailed consideration of the ethics of the proposal are provided.

My only additional point for consideration would be that as the professional role of the researcher is the Course Director of the mandatory course for new academic staff, there is a potential that the Coventry participants could be enrolled on the applicants course. If this is the case, then the information to participants needs to include details that participant will not influence their study.

2. Evaluation of the participant information sheet and consent form:

The PIS and consent form are details and clear. However if the participants are enrolled on the researchers course there needs to be information to make it clear that participation in the research will not influence /impact on their study.

3. Recommendation:

(Please indicate as appropriate and advise on any conditions. If there any conditions, the applicant will be required to resubmit his/her application and this will be sent to the same reviewer).

☒

Approved - no conditions attached

☐

Approved with minor conditions (no need to re-submit)

☐

Conditional upon the following – please use additional sheets if necessary (please re-submit application)

☐

Rejected for the following reason(s) – please use other side if necessary

☐

Not required

Name of reviewer: Anonymous.....

Date: 06/06/2013

Appendix 2 - Participant Information Sheet and Consent Statement

Study title:

From Practitioner to University Lecturer: The Transformative Journey To Become a 21st Educator

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of this upgraded study is to explore at a deeper level the transitional experiences, feelings and hindsight of new faculty entering HE to become University Lecturers from non-traditional routes, namely that of professional practice. A substantive-level theory emerged during Masters level research and this project aims to explore this theory, termed as 'the theory of Conscious Assumption', further to establish if it forms a concrete theoretical principle for use in practice and the limitations.

Why have I been approached?

For the purposes of the longitudinal study I need to recruit around 20-25 University Lecturers from across the sector and disciplines, people who are working either part-time or full-time, and who have direct experience of the phenomenon being studied – people who are able to tell the story of their transition from professional practice to that of University Lecturer during the last 5 years. Participants are the 'knowledge bearers', those with first-hand experience and who are able to articulate thoughts, experiences, feelings as well as the learning gained from hindsight to enable a narration of their individual story to be created. These individual narrations eventually will form a collective tale. You have been approached also because your experience of this transition enables you to critically comment upon the 'theory of conscious assumption' and its future relevance to practice. These are the only criteria that I have for recruiting people to the study.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation is entirely voluntary. If you change your mind about taking part in the study you can withdraw at any point during the interview stage and at any time in the two weeks following that interview meeting. You can withdraw by contacting me on email and providing me with your participant information number. If you decide to withdraw all your data will be destroyed and will not be used in the study. There are no consequences to deciding that you no longer wish to participate in the study.

What will happen to me if I take part?

I will meet with you at your place of work or another appropriate venue to carry out an interview. The interview will be time bound to a maximum of 2 hours during which you will be told about the background, shown and asked questions relating to your own transitional journey from professional practice to that of HE teaching. Illustrations will be shown relating to a career transition cycle and the 'theory of conscious assumption' will be revealed for you to critically comment upon.

The interview will be recorded for later transcription either using voice recording or video recording equipment for which your permission will be asked upfront. The recording will be used to produce a transcript of the interview (the story). You will receive a copy of the transcript once it has been typed up and at that point you will be provided with the opportunity make changes. The interview will take place in a private room on a one-to-one basis with the researcher. Your confidentiality will be respected throughout the process.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

You will need to give up a couple of hours of your time to attend the interview and therefore you may need to seek approval from your line manager to do this. You can refuse to answer questions if you wish and to stop the interview at any time.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

As a part-time or full-time HE lecturer you will be given access not only to your transcript but the final publication which will give you an insight to the collective transitional journeys of peers entering HE to teach from non-traditional routes. You will be part of helping to identify improvements that assist professional practitioners and their engaging institutions.

As one of the narrators, you will have contributed to the collective story will add knowledge/advice to the current Body of Knowledge and Practice in relation to professional practitioners working in Higher Education. Narrative inquiry has been adopted as the research method and as a result your involvement as a co-narrator will engage you with the applied practice of this developing research method. Further academic collaborative work might result as this longitudinal study progresses and evolves.

What if something goes wrong?

If we have to cancel an interview I will attempt to contact you as soon as possible using the preferred method indicated by you on the consent form.

If you change your mind about taking part in the study you can withdraw at any point during the process and/or interview and at any time in the two weeks following that

interview by contacting me using the email address stated below. If you decide to withdraw all your data will be destroyed and will not be used in the study.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes. Only I will have access to the raw data. All the consent forms will be stored in a separate, secure (locked) location from the raw data itself. You will only be identified on the score sheet by your participant code number and later in publications either by a code or pseudonym. I will only retain the raw data from the project until my final mark for my PhD thesis has been given. They will then be destroyed. When the data has been entered into a computer file, your comments will only be associated with your code number and access to the file will be password protected.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results will be written up and presented as part of my PhD Thesis. Publications may arise during and after this period where findings or reflections are presented at academic conferences, written up for publication in peer reviewed academic journals, professional journals, books, book chapters, etc. Throughout, your details will be kept confidential through the use of coding or pseudonym.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is organised by Louise Wilson, who is a Senior Lecturer in Academic Development at Coventry University working in the Organisation Development and Learning Department and a PhD student at this institution. This project is not externally funded forming part of a PhD study.

Who has reviewed the study?

The Coventry University Ethics Committee has reviewed and approved this study prior to interviews commencing.

Additional Note: Coventry University Academic Staff

If you are enrolled on the researchers Course at Coventry University, Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Professional Practice, at the time of the interview please note that your participation in the research will not influence or impact upon your study.

Contact for Further Information

Louise Wilson - l.wilson@coventry.ac.uk

Director of Studies (Project Supervisor)

Dr Janet Hannah, Coventry University London Campus -
Janet.hannah@culc.coventry.ac.uk

The Consent Statement

Participant Reference Code: _____

I have read and understand the attached participant information sheet and by signing below I consent to participate in this study.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time during the study itself.

I understand that I also have the right to change my mind about participating in the study for a short period after the study has concluded (insert deadline here).

Signed: _____

Print Name: _____

Witnessed by: _____

Print Name: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date _____

Remember that:

All signatures must be witnessed. You, as the researcher, can act as the witness. **Give all participants a copy of the signed consent form with the participant information sheet. Retain a copy of the signed consent form with the participant information sheet.** However, the consent form and information sheet must be on separate pages. Rather than photocopy signatures, you could produce two consent statements on one page, ask the participant to sign both parts, and give them the bottom half of the page. Make sure their copy has their participant code on it.

Appendix 3 – Interview Schedule

Background to the Study

- Reminder about the project origins and purpose, researchers role and participant role
- Explain what will happen – interview process and right to withdraw
- Consent, PIS and signed Consent form
- Show illustration of the Career Transition Cycle and setting the context/interest in study

Warm Up Questions

- Can you talk me through the time when you made the decision to become a teacher at a University? Why did you choose this?
- Can you say a bit about the time from when you made this decision to when you actually joined the University? What were your feelings and emotions at that time?
- Can you take me through what you were expecting and your perceptions of this new role?
- Can you tell me a bit about why you think you were chosen/engaged in the role?

Guiding Questions

- Can you take me through your first few months - the time when you had started and become a lecturer teaching in a University? How were you feeling? What were you doing? Why?
- Can you say a bit about how you had prepared for this role beforehand? What did you think you might need to know or do?
- Had you worked in a similar field before or studied? How had that prepared you to teach your subject? Or for life as part of an academic community? Why?
- Can you talk me through what you were expecting during the early transition period? Why?
- Can you tell me a bit about how long it has taken you to settle in to the role and to know what is required? Why?
- Can you think of a time/episode/event that stands out along your journey? (negative/positive and personal/academic)? Why?
- Can you reflect back on any high points over the period? And any low points? Why these?
- Can you comment on any event that changed how you saw things? Or how you acted? Or felt?
- Can you say a bit about your identity? What do you say to others that you do? Why?
- Can you say something about your academic identity? What is it? When did you become aware of the importance of this? Why?
- Can you reflect back on what has helped or hindered the transition process? What were these? Why? What were your feelings and emotions at that point in time?
- Reflecting back, if you had to retrace your steps to the beginning of this story and reapply your own actions, how might they be different? Alternative steps?
- Thinking about those following on behind you with aspirations of becoming a University Lecturer from professional practice, what advice would you offer them from your hindsight?
- Thinking about the institutions engaging professional practitioners, what advice would you offer to them from your hindsight?
- Can you reflect back to your perceptions and expectations before becoming a University Lecturer and say if they have become reality? Do they match? What are your feelings and emotions now? Where to next?
- Can you say a bit about how you have felt in succeeding along the path from professional practitioner to that of University Lecturer (teacher)? Why? What would illustrate this journey to others?

Winding down

- Your story has been fascinating to hear about and it has given me insight into the experiences you have had. Do you think there is anything else that I should have asked you? Or that you want to add?

- If anything occurs later, here are my contact details. I would welcome further comments.
- I am interviewing others next, are there other people that you know who might be willing to talk to me?

Appendix 4 – Keywords Searched List (Example)

Keywords Searched – Review of Literature
Transition to university lecturer
Transition experience
Transition Journey to lecturer
Transition events new job
Becoming a University Lecturer from Professional Practice
Professional Practitioners in Higher Education
Professional Practitioners working in UK universities
New University Lecturers
New lecturers in 21 st Century
Lecturers blending professions
Early Career Academics
Academic Induction
On-boarding
Practitioners working in UK Higher Education
Academic Work in Higher Education
Academic Work in Disciplinary Fields
Moving from working in the Professional Field to Disciplinary Field to teach
Academic Citizenship in Higher Education and in Academic Life
Lecturers in Higher Education
Researchers Higher Education
Teachers Higher Education
Administration Higher Education
Communities of Practice and Learning
Academic Careers in Higher Education or Academic Life
Changing fields of employment
Career Change Career Moves
Career move university lecturer from practice
Career move or transition university academic from practice
Career move or transition from professional life to academic life or work
Career move or transition from professional life to academic work
Higher Education work environments and workplaces (or places of work)
Professional Practitioner Career Moves and Career Transition
Psychological Contracts in work and academic life

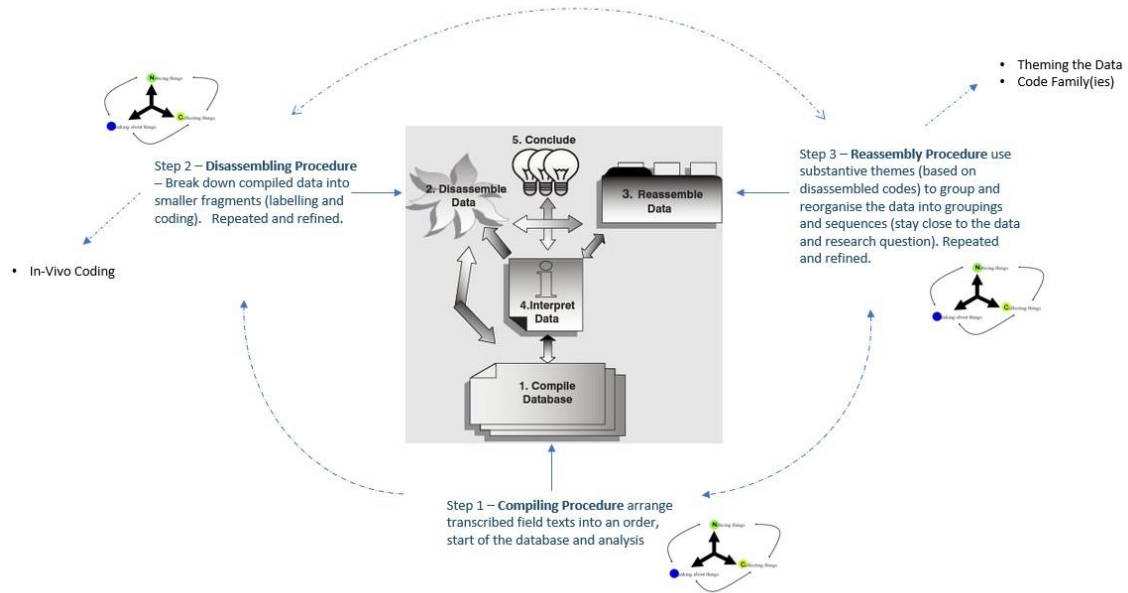
Psychological Contracts academics and professional practitioners
Transition Cycle Emotions, Feelings and Perceptions
Work or Transition Cycles
Occupational Transition Cycle
Life Transition Cycle
Changing Landscape of Higher Education
Changing Landscape of Higher Education last 10 years
Culture UK Higher Education
Academic Life Research
Academic Life Teaching or Lecturing
Academic Life Professional Practitioners
Research Game in Academic Life
Academic Habitus in Academic Life and Work
Bourdieu and Lucas Academic Habitus
Academic Career Trajectories in Academic Life
Fields of Transition and Struggles in Academic Life
Managing Academic Careers in Academic Life and HE
Managing Developing Academic Careers
Academic Staff Leaving Higher Education Workplaces
Academic Transition Cycles, theory and Models
Professional Career Transition Cycles and models
Occupational Transition cycles and models
Life and Transition Cycles and models
Career Changers Transition and Career Trajectory
Change in <u>UK</u> Higher Education
Future of Higher Education and Academic Practice
Future of Professional Practitioners, Academics and Lecturers in Higher Education
Managerialism and Performativity in Higher Education
Discipline fields in Higher Education and importance
Academic Induction and Probationary Lecturers in Higher Education
Academic Induction New Lecturers
Academic Induction new Academics
Academic Induction new Lecturers or Academics from Professional Practice
Emotions at work and
Emotions and Transition ...

Appendix 5 – Keyword Search and Combinations - Literature Search (Example)

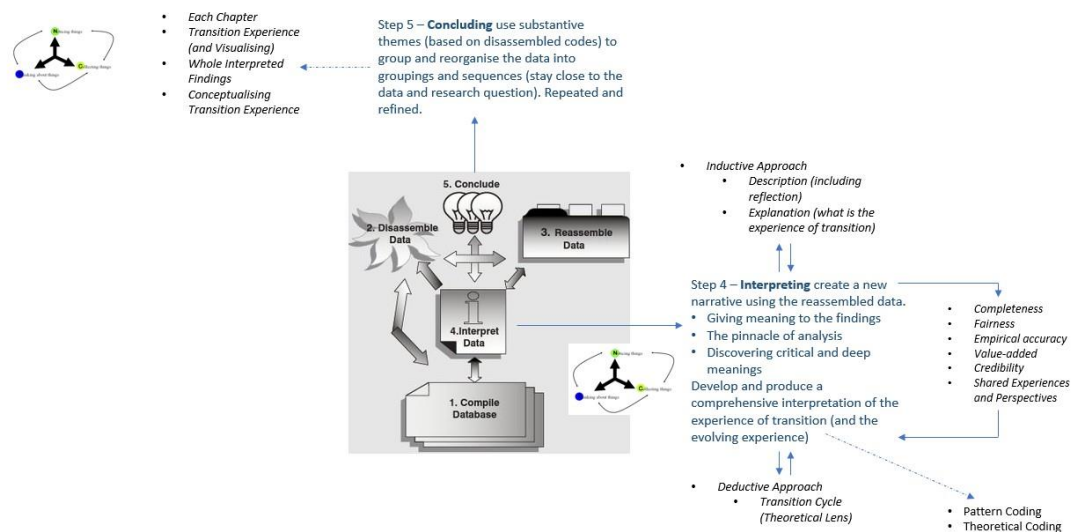
Keywords Searched	Combinations		
	Variation	or	and
Transition to university lecturer	Transition to University Lecturer	University Lecturer Transition	Moving to University Lecturer
Transition experience	Transition experience	Transition experience(s)	Experience(s) of Transition
Transition Journey to lecturer	Transition journey to lecturer	Transition journey to lecturer or university academic	Transition journey to lecturer and university academic
Becoming a University Lecturer from Professional Practice	Becoming a University Lecturer from Professional Practice	Becoming a University Lecturer from Practice	Professionals becoming university lecturers
	Becoming a University Lecturer	Becoming a university lecturer or teacher	Nurses becoming new university lecturers
	Engineers becoming lecturers	Lecturers from engineering	Engineering lecturers in Higher Education
	Nurses becoming lecturers	Lecturers from nursing	Nursing lecturers in Higher Education
	Managers becoming lecturers	Lecturers from management	Management lecturers in Higher Education
	Lawyers becoming lecturers	Lecturers from law or legal	Law lecturers in Higher Education
	Teachers becoming lecturers	Lecturers from teaching	Teaching lecturers in Higher Education
	Doctors becoming lecturers	Lecturers from general practice	Doctors and general practice lecturers in HE
	Artists becoming lecturers	Lecturers from artist or creative backgrounds	Artist lecturers in Higher Education
Professional Practitioners in Higher Education	Professional Practitioners in Higher Education	Practitioners in Higher Education	Higher Education and Professional Practitioners
Professional Practitioners working in UK universities	Professional Practitioners working in UK universities	Practitioners in UK universities	UK university lecturer from practice
New University Lecturers	New University Lecturers	New university lecturers in higher education	New lecturers
New lecturers in 21 st Century	New lecturers in 21 st Century	21 st Century New Lecturers or Teachers	21 st Century New Teachers and Lecturers
	New Academics in 21 st Century	New Academics in 21 st Century Higher Education	New Teachers in 21 st Century Higher education
Lecturers blending professions	Lecturers blending professions	Blending professions lecturer or practitioners	Blending professions practitioners and lecturers
Early Career Academics	Early Career Academics	Early Career Academics or Higher Education Early Career Academics	Higher Education and Early Career Academics
Academic Induction	Academic Induction	Induction for new academics or lecturers	Induction for new academics and lecturers
...

Appendix 6 – Overview of Thematic Analysis and Procedure (Example)

Thematic Analysis Overview showing **Stage 1: Compiling, Disassembling, and Reassembling** (including methods applied)



Thematic Analysis Overview showing **Stage 2: Interpreting and Concluding** (including methods applied)



Reflective Journal – Drawing together Yin's (2016:186) Five Phases of Analysis and Their Interpretation with Friese's Friese's (2014:12) The NCT Model and Saldana's Salanda (2013) methods for coding, interpretation and conceptualisation has provided a useful overview and route map for interpreting the experience of transition and the evolving transition experience. Combined for application and to use for thinking about this research, the experiences and findings in the context of a narrative study. Other models summarising Thematic Analysis from Nursing were useful as visual (Sundler, et al 2019:736) but not fitting here. However, the idea of a 'summary' gave rise to me developing this diagram to assist summarise interpretation here based combined on theory and procedures.

Appendix 7 – Initial Cycle - Transcription Example

(Recording Converted to Field Text)

Transcribed [Reference] – [Name]

Interviewer: Q1 Can you talk me through the time when you made the decision to become a teacher at a university? Why did you choose this? (8 mins 24 seconds)

Participant: There was quite a large gap between the time that I started, that I made the decision, and when I actually joined. I probably started enquiring about the position in probably May or June and so it was already in my head that this would be a really great job. That this was exactly what I want to do and because of the firm that I worked with my notice period was 3 months so, I would have had to [pause] by the time that I would have got through the interview stage and I wasn't really sure how I was going to do but, by the time that I got offered the job I probably, it is probably about 3 ½ months before I actually started. So, I went through a lot of feelings and emotions. To start with I was very excited and as the time sort of wore on I then started to get a bit nervous 'am I doing the right thing here?' I was good, I would like to think that I was very good at the job that I was in before. My employer didn't want me to leave, and they would question 'are you sure that this is what you want to do?' 'It's going to be very, very different culturally', 'Is this what'. It really is the biggest lesson that I have learned - how different it is working in private sector versus public sector. So, there was sort of feeling of doubt 'will I be able to do this?', 'is it the right thing?' um but genuine excitement of trying something new something that I had always thought about doing even when I was a student. I wanted to go out and get practical experience and then become a teacher. I wasn't sure if that would be in academia or whether it would be professional qualifications tutor because I am an [gave profession]. So, I have had to do lots of training along the way not all of it at university. So, I would say excitement, anxiety, also if we think on the other side, I had started to feel a bit sort of bored of this three-month notice period. It's a long time and I had kind of lost the love of my job before and I was so ready to finish, wrap it up and move on so, but excitement was definitely the big one. Totally that was the main feeling that I would say at the time ...

Interviewer: Q17 Thinking about those following on behind you with aspirations of becoming a University Lecturer from professional practice, what advice would you offer them from your hindsight? (1 hour 14 minutes)

Participant: Ok, I would say not to, not to doubt yourself. That you are capable of doing it and that it is a life changing decision but not to be afraid of that. It is like going into the unknown again. You are kind of starting your career from scratch again. You have worked really hard to get to where you are and then you are like 'oh no let's throw that all away and start again', and I don't know anything again, and you are working your way up. My advice would be, not to be afraid of that because I certainly was to start with. It just happened and here I am. It is such a big change isn't it. It's totally different and I think that there will be people out there thinking about it but are too afraid to do it. So, that would be my key piece of advice. I would try and prepare them for the cultural shock. Because that is a really, it is manageable but, that is a really big part isn't it. You know going from private sector to public sector but also you know going into academia. It's just totally different. *[Interviewers note: two cultures to navigate private to public and practice into academic life – two cultures to clash]*. So, I think maybe preparing them for that. Or I think that most people are going to expect there to be a difference, but I don't think, well I certainly didn't expect it, on the scale that I saw it when I came here. So, so just making people aware of that I would say. But other than that, if you are the sort of person who enjoys learning and enjoys sharing your knowledge and you know interacting with learners then it is definitely the right thing to do.

Appendix 8 – Initial Cycle - Short Biography Example (From Locations)

[Bio Example A – HE11] [name]... arrived to teach her subject on a temporary basis initially and secured a permanent post whilst working in the institution. It is only three years into this that she starts to feel settled but not really a true academic because of her limited engagement with research. [name] had worked in professional practice for over twenty years holding senior management positions, shaping and driving the organisation before going on to take up consultancy. She is found loving her teaching and her students but disillusioned with academia. The teaching and administration workloads have taken over diminishing the time she has to drive forward the research element of the role. In a way, the realisation of the 'fall' from a senior post in industry to that of holding a lecturing post surfaced only really when she achieved this permanency, something that she had to fight for. Her academic life has taken her from the cutting edge of practice to a place where without a PhD she can't progress, where academic freedom is constrained by administration burdens and where she now refers to herself as one of the 'minions'. The adjustment to the new world brings about lots of different emotions. She remains on the road forging ahead with the awareness that her previous achievements translate into little currency within this new world. Her understanding is compounded by the fact that promotion hasn't been possible. With 10 years to retirement exposure inside the academic world has altered here focus and goals in life illuminating the pathway in front of her. For [name], this is the last stretch of her working career. A job where she can secure a pensionable future. It is no longer a career. So she is not being deterred and plans to stay until she retires doing what she loves helping and guiding students into the profession but at the same time looking after herself, her health, her family and her interests. This change of mind-set sees [name] travelling forwards in her pursuit, head down and not turning back. The occasional hankerings for the external world of work arise momentarily, at different points, but these are not romanticised upon. She sums up her transition to academia as 'slight disillusionment but nevertheless a happy accident'. Realising that creating the research profile required, at this point in time, to rise up the ladder is unlikely, but another option opens, one to regain some of the freedom lost by returning to a more part-time basis. Only time will tell how this story will play out.

[Bio Example B – HE12] [name]... joined Higher Education at the point where the economy had hit a low point taking the decision to move from professional life, following redundancy, into teaching within a university. He had worked in industry for over 20 years in different areas progressing into management, directorship, and consultancy roles during this phase of life. He found himself being drawn by the motivation to educate others, to bring them on in the profession, to share his experiences to develop them and the creative nature of being an academic in a teaching role. The fact that he could create and carve the lessons for people to learn. He began 'on the outside' of the institution and the academy in control of how much he was prepared to be sucked 'inside'. But as time went on he found himself as a natural in this new environment and made the practical decision to transfer across entirely from practice to that of a new profession as a Lecturer. He committed himself to working full-time for one institution, the one he was found practicing in, just under a year ago and fully realising that he had entered at the lowest level aware that to progress he would need to work towards being accomplished as a researcher too. This is the route that he has chosen, and he does not see himself returning to industry. His time has been served in industry and now he embarks upon a different life, a different career and in a place where he can work with a variety of people to bring them on in life, sharing experiences and helping those who come to Higher Education for a certain learning experience to be given this through what he does. He is passionate about his subject and has a clear idea of where his future is leading, into researching. He finds himself frustrated sometimes that students don't always put the effort in as they did in his days, in his country, but realising

that each person is on their own journey and through his efforts he is connecting with them through experiences shared, lessons explained and encouragement. As he gets older the students don't change, they remain the same age! A thought for all teachers to hold dearly on their passage through education meeting and supporting the vast numbers of new people they bring on and meet each year acting as a resource for people to tap into whilst they remain educators who have crossed over from practice to teach others.

[Bio Example 3 – HEI3] [name]... had always hoped that one day she would become a teacher, but she did not know where this would be and had not really thought about academia looking more towards the providers of professional qualifications. She thought that it would be something that she would do in later life when she was married and had a family. That way she could bring to her teaching what she always valued from those that had taught her the practical experience and knowledge of the workplace with real life scenarios that could be used to enrich the topic. She left the profession and a management role to become a University Lecturer six months ago and the feeling that rises to the top was one of excitement. It would be a new job, a new culture, it was a move from the private to the public sector, but it was something that she always knew that she was drawn to but felt that it would come about in later life when she had the practice under her belt to share with other [professionals in her applied field]. She was very good at her job and her employer had tried to discourage her from making the move but drawn by the opportunity and her heart she moved careers only a few months ago. She hadn't expected that students would require so much pastoral support outside of the classroom. [name] feels that she has found her dream job and knows that she is on a learning curve but one where she hoped to have in the next 5 years become a real pro and be publishing in the newer fields that she has begun to identify. She hopes that studying a Master's on her way to pursuing a PhD will further help her more deeply as a researcher. An area that she does not feel experienced or knowledgeable enough in in the academic sense. In a way she is living 'the dream' in a new job which has provided a fresh start that is exciting, and she loves teaching as well as learning having been a student part-time whilst working full-time after obtaining her university degree. At times it has felt like the heavy weight of practice has been lifted and the pressures of that life, but different worries (or pressures) exist in the new world but none that can't be learned about or overcome. For Sarah giving up practice to work full-time has been an exciting experience, one that she is proud of and one that puts meaning back into working life – life is more than money. For her it is about people, developing them, sharing knowledge with them and even if this means that she finds herself in a dark tunnel, blind folded at times as she feels her way around, she is thoroughly enjoying what she does now and is found rising to a variety of challenges and looking to developing herself further in research and publications.

[Bio Example 4 – HEI3] [name]... is found teaching her subject with a university having studied the topic and put it into practice within industry. She brings the knowledge of the practice back to the classroom to help others who return to university to obtain a qualification in that field. [name] has been teaching for just over three years and loves what she does. It brings her joy, it is challenging, it has been and still is exhausting at times. She works hard dedicating her time to developing learning that students will benefit from moulding this on how she liked to learn as a student and using this as a template to teach others. She believes that whilst being in one way an eternal student as she has studied part-time and worked in industry for most of her life this benefits her students and the university because she can use the theory on which her knowledge was grounded and enhance this by her practical experience to make the subject come alive and helps other to understand why they need to learn about certain topics. She naturally asks questions when she does not know something, and this has been a great help to her in life and as she settled into life within the academy. She is confident to call herself a University Lecturer

and is in search of her own academic identity within this new world. She feels that she has found the place that she naturally fits into in life and is looking now to become full-time. [name] has a supportive husband who has been there in the background encouraging her and supporting her when work has become overwhelming in quantity. [name] is now at the point of where she feels she has succeeded in what she set out to do and does not want to leave life in a university. She describes her future as not necessarily climbing a ladder but 'floating upwards' to the next level where she pursues a PhD doing so with a big grin of achievement on her face and joy! She hopes to be able to reduce her lecturing load and gain a balance to enable her to engage in research developing the topic that she has already in mind and being able to balance life and work. It's been a learning curve and one that she is still enjoying. [name] a management career within industry to start again as a Lecturer giving back what she gained from life and education to others – the human side of helping others who follow where you have been into the field of a professional career in their chosen industry or destination is how [name] saw it.

Appendix 9 – First Cycle Analysis – In Vivo Coding Example

I started during the summer period.	"TIME", "START", "SEASON"
The whole place was actually <u>quite</u> , and I am not used to actually working within a quiet environment and thinks like previously when I was at [name] it was a buzzing, manic, crisis all the time moment.	"FIRST EXPERIENCE", "IMPRESSIONS", "CULTURE CHANGE"
So, coming to the [number] floor of the University and I was expecting it to be full on with students but not realising that it was summer so there was no teaching happening and I was sitting there going [identifier]. It's empty' and er I didn't know, well to be honest for the first two or three weeks I was <u>actually pretty</u> idle.	"EXPECTATIONS", DAY ONE", "SEASON", "TEACHING", "LEARNING", "ADRIFT"
Everything is different. The system is different. And I would have loads of questions as to why do you do things this way? It doesn't <u>actually fit</u> with practice. It doesn't seem right. As time went <u>by</u> I realised that there was a reason for what they were doing and I think initially I was being quite critical in the nicest way.	"DIFFERENT", "SYSTEMS", "QUESTIONS", "FIT", "COMPARISON", "TIME", "REASONS", "LEARNING", "ADJUSTMENT"
Eventually when we started in September the whole game thing <u>actually changed</u> and I was involved much well Module Lead and I thought 'what? I can't module lead!' What's wrong with you?	"START", "GAME THING", "CHANGES", "MODULE LEADERSHIP" "WHAT", "SHOCK/SURPRISE"
So, I went for my first teaching <u>session</u> and I was actually quite scared, nervous! I went in there and it was <u>actually fine</u> . It went, well <u>pretty well</u> in the main.	"FEELINGS", "FEELING SCARED", "FEELING NERVOUS", "TEACHING"
Module leading was a different story altogether. And I had all these questions like what is module leading? I don't get it. But I must admit I thought it was kind of strange putting me into the cold water. But I thought well I don't think that is fair I had just started.	"DIFFERENT STORY", "MODULE LEADERSHIP", "QUESTIONS", "DON'T GET IT", "COLD WATER", "FAIRNESS",
But I <u>do actually know</u> why they did it this way and it was more an active process. Get on with it and you will <u>actually learn</u> but they were actually still in the background kind of supporting.	"KNOWING", "ACTIVE PROCESS", "LEARNING", "BACKGROUND SUPPORT"
I am glad that I have <u>actually learned</u> and done it this way because I think when I actually had time to reflect on it, on my practice and adjust things accordingly.	"GLAD", "REFLECTION", "ADJUST"
I feel ... because my mentor who is <u>actually the</u> [identifier] she kind of constantly asked me in our one-to-one meetings 'did you make the right decision?' And thinking back on it is there any plus for it? Well, it is a massive pay cut! It's not exactly what I expected I don't think. But the answer has been and up until now ' <u>yes</u> ' the right decision. I still think	"MENTOR", "RIGHT CHOICES", "PLUS(ES), 'THINKING BACK', 'PAY CUT' 'RIGHT DECISION'

Analysis and Reflective Memo

ATLAS.ti was used for In Vivo Codes to record. Involved reading the interview script, attuning to the words and phrases that seem to call for highlighting. Where it seemed, there was merit a code was applied drawn from the participants terms. A code 'that refers to a word or short phrase from the actual language found in qualitative data record' Salanda (2013:91). The goal was to frame my interpretations from the stories told in

the terms used by professional practitioners rather than in terms 'derived from the academic disciplines or professional practices (Stringer, 1999:91 cited by Saldana, 2013:92). From this initial labelling process, a list of initial codes were created and the start of a Code List formed. Eg: Academic Community; Age; Academic Identity; Background; Bio; Character; Challenge; Community; Comparison; Credibility; Culture; Emotion: Event; Expectations; Experiences (Negative); Experiences (Positive); External Help; Feelings; First Few Months; etc; ... It was clear that descriptive codes emerged and also those that were abstract, but the risk was being swamped by codes. The second step was to reflect on the code, to tidy them up and restructure to make thinking about them and where they were similar subsuming them under one or another code.

Currently, these codes are 'real codes' because they are just a list of codes (labels) drawn out of the typed document from the words provided by the participants. They were descriptive and interesting because what began to emerge was the terms and language used by practitioners to describe their story of the experience of transition. I noticed that I began to see similarities in the stories and their coding but also differences. The code list was getting larger and larger and that needed to be managed. Luckily, ATLAS.ti has a function (Code Manager) to do that and made the process of coding and theming a lot more straightforward to record. More efficient I think than if I using pen and paper or trying to keep track of the codes using electronic documents on my PC. From this initial coding I saw that there was a lot of short words and short themes emerging but as of yet there was no meaning to these, a list. There are lots for me to code because 1.5 hour interviews generated plenty of data and unlike a Case Study where there might be one or two field texts I had 23 to code and theme. It was good that ATLAS.ti enabled me to match coding to the next field text when they were found to fit and be the same. This helped me towards creating one list of codes for review and refining at the next stage. But first, I needed to get through the coding of them all!

Appendix 10 – Second Cycle Analysis – Theming the Data Code List Example

HU: PhD Data Analysis 1a - 27 March 2015
 File: [C:\Users\LouiseWilson\Backups (All)\Backing Up - PhD\...\PhD Data Analysis 1a - 27 March 2015.hpr7]
 Edited by: Super

ACADEMIC COMMUNITY: General	EVENT: Doubt about move
ACCOMMUNITY: Joining	EVENT: Management Style
ACCOMMUNITY: Status	EVENT: Support peers and managers
AGE: General	EVENT: That changed things
AI: Age	EVENT: That stand out
AI: Don't Know How To	EXPECT & PERCEPT: Research prior
AI: Examples to students	EXPECT: from interview
AI: General	EXPECT: Peers prior
AI: Helping others	EXPECT: PgCert
AI: Importance	EXPECT: Prior Thoughts and Thinking
AI: Meaning	EXPECT: Students prior
AI: None	EXPECT: Support
AI: Peers	EXPECT: teaching experience
AI: Perceptions	EXPECT: teaching job/role
AI: Questioning it	EXPECT: Unsure/None
AI: Reactions	EXPECT: Versus Reality
AI: Research	EXPERIENCES NEGATIVE: Colleagues and Peers
AI: Several identities	EXPERIENCES NEGATIVE: General
AI: Students	EXPERIENCES NEGATIVE: University
AI: Thoughts	EXPERIENCES POSITIVE: Colleagues and peers
AI: Trying to Find	EXPERIENCES POSITIVE: General
AI: Versus Prof Identity	EXPERIENCES POSITIVE: Students
BACKGROUND: Before	EXPERIENCES POSITIVE: Nice comments
BACKGROUND: Experience prior to becoming	EXTERNAL HELP: Family & connections
BACKGROUND: Past life	FEELINGS: Acceptance
BACKGROUND: Pathway in Aumni or Student	FEELINGS: Confidence
BACKGROUND: Personal	FEELINGS: Disappointment
BACKGROUND: Previous work	FEELINGS: Fraud
BACKGROUND: <u>Qualifications</u> prior	FEELINGS: Frustration or annoyance
BECOMING: Destiny, Fate & Good Luck	FEELINGS: Love
BIO: General	FEELINGS: Low points
CAREER CHANGE: Changing Profession	FEELINGS: Now v Prior to becoming
CHALLENGE: As a <u>movitator</u>	FEELINGS: Outsider
CHALLENGE: New and fresh	FEELINGS: Passionate
COMMUNITY: Family & Friends	FEELINGS: Positive
COMMUNITY: Professionals Inside	FEELINGS: Pride
COMPARISONS: Previous Life	FEELINGS: Research
CREDIBILITY: Negative Feelings	FEELINGS: Teaching
CREDIBILITY: Positive Feelings	FEELINGS: Trust
CREDIBILITY: Positive thoughts	FEELINGS: Unsupported
CREDITIBITY: Negative Thoughts	FIRST FEW MONTHS: Work and Doing
CULTURE: General	FIRST FEW MONTHS: Fitting in
CULTURE: Shock(s)	FIRST FEW MONTHS: Learning
EMOTION: General	FIRST FEW MONTHS: Module Leader
EMOTION: Missing Practice	FIRST FEW MONTHS: Support
EMOTION: Worry or anxiety	FIRST FEW MONTHS: Teaching
EMOTIONS: Nov v Prior to becoming	FIRST FEW MONTHS: Views

Analysis and Reflective Memo

The interpretation phase is at the *descriptive level* here because of the need to turn and theme the first codes and first themes into themes that can be used for analysis. The level up to produce a list of meaningful themes that help sense to be made and understanding brought about what it meant - the experience of transition to professional practitioners during their journey. Also, what it means to me as I learn about this collective group from their individual stories but where I can notice, think about and compare this to my own journey and life. The time when points made or terms resonate with my own personal experience. When this happens these need to be recorded separately in a diary as they make good records and opportunities for learning or seeing.

Next guidance provided Friese (2014:130) was followed. ATLAS.ti continued to be used to set up a code manager as part of the system of coding and for consistency. The method adopted is to **CAPITALISE** the

'prefix indicating the **main category** from the subcategory name' Friese (2014:130). That way the main category is the prefix and what follows after are the subcategories that belong and connect to the main theme, sorted automatically into alphabetical order by ATLAS.ti's code manager, see the **first few months** of the experience of transition below:

FIRST FEW MONTHS

FIRST FEW MONTHS: Work and Doing

FIRST FEW MONTHS: Fitting in

FIRST FEW MONTHS: Learning

FIRST FEW MONTHS: Module Leader

FIRST FEW MONTHS: Support

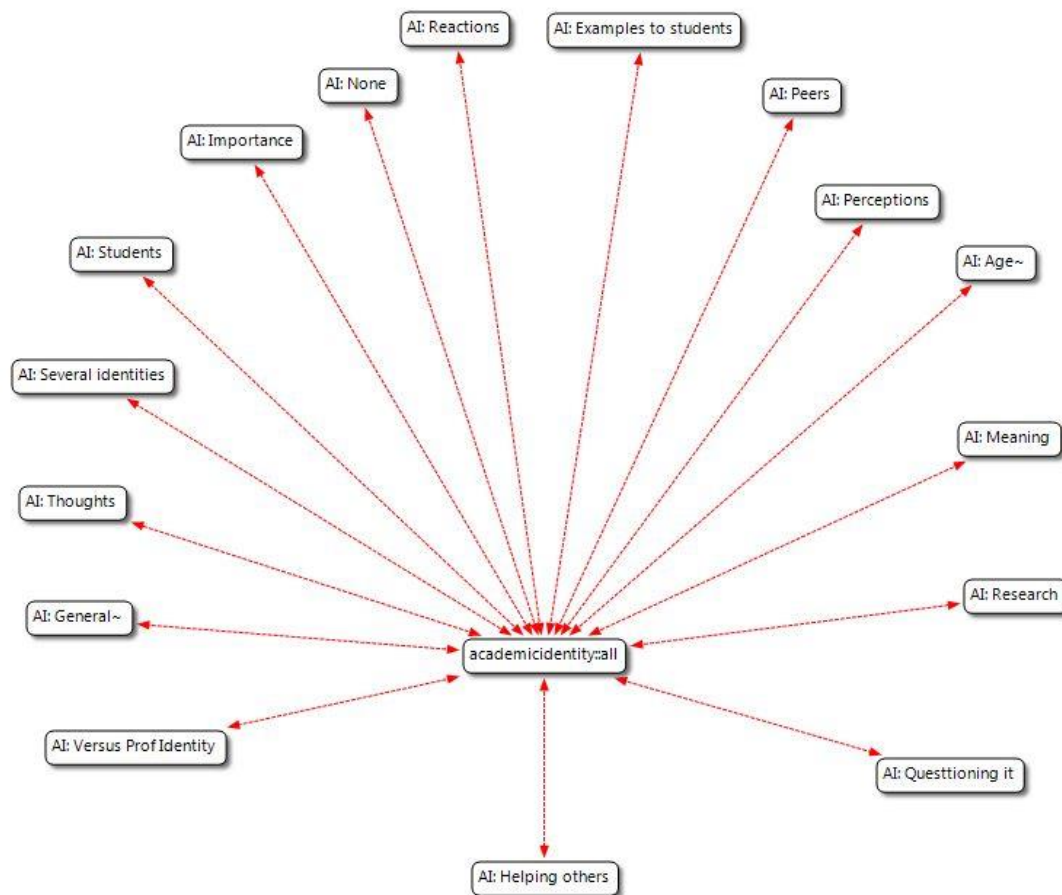
FIRST FEW MONTHS: Teaching

FIRST FEW MONTHS: Views

This led to the data being themed and the number of codes organised into a structure that helped me start to see the different elements associated with the experience of transition. At of yet, understanding was not developed but it did begin to be described in part through the codes and initial themes. Throughout this process the NCT model was applied in relation to noticing, thinking and collecting. Collecting related to the organisation of the words into labels and organising them into a restructure so themes that were related were kept together. From this, mini stories began to be seen about the themes for example the **first few months** began to tell about: the work practitioners were doing, fitting in, what they were learning, becoming module leaders relatively quickly, the support needed (or lacking), the job of teaching and the their views about this early period in the transition cycle. This has helped me to recall my first few months but also to recognise that I was a long distance away from that now in comparison to my peers here. But, the things they said and told about did still resonate with me and with the observations I made in my academic practice whilst leading the PgCAPHE. Also, through conversations I had with new lecturers as they obtained their qualification related to Teaching and Learning.

At this stage of the process, I had created Code Families for each of the themes. These could be visualised in ATLAS.ti and seen as Code Family Example e.g. Academic Identity (Appendix 8)

Appendix 11 – Second Cycle Analysis - Code Family Example (Academic Identity)



Analysis and Reflective Memo

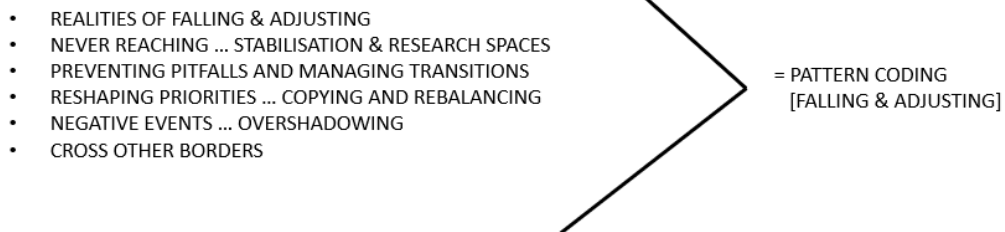
Theming the data had led to being able to see a picture of each of the themed families which here showed Academic Identity. This highlighted that: helping others, questioning it, research, meaning (making), age, perceptions, peers, examples to students, reactions, importance, students, several identities, thoughts, general, and academic identity versus a professional identity came to be part of the story about the experience of transition. I began to notice that Academic Identity was a new concept to these new staff and that few really understood what this mean or the implications of it early-on. This lead me back to questioning why and also to seeing that some practitioners were comfortable with the identity they held, their professional identity. Others held different views. But the ideas of several identities, the importance and academic identity versus professional identity seemed interesting themes to consider further. The question raised was how the different number of themes would be integrated into the story about the experience of transition. There were many and not all could have a place in the final write-up but could go on to generate journal articles and future threads for research. Making sense of the interpreted themes followed this inductive process. Inductive research meant taking the research question from 'description analysis [to] final theory' (Saunders, 2009) which meant progressing through the conceptual levels whilst still continuing to apply the NCT model to the point of where it was not needed, the end. I recognised that this point, that when thinking about the 'transition cycle' that a deductive approach might also be needed as part of the research process and that it might eventually lead onto a need to revise or rethink this in the context of the experience of transition for professional practitioners who have become university academics.

Appendix 12 – Conceptual Level – Pattern Coding Example 1

Purpose and Process:

- Make sense of the *interpreted* themes from the second-cycle analysis phase
- Look for relationships and patterns
 - Look for how these integrate to tell a coherent story
- Attribute meaning to the organised data
 - Take and use the developed categories to identify patterns
- Turn the data through two final processes: pattern coding and theoretical coding
- Leads to understanding the experience of transition by drawing from the findings and through researcher's interpretation

Example – Falling and Adjusting:



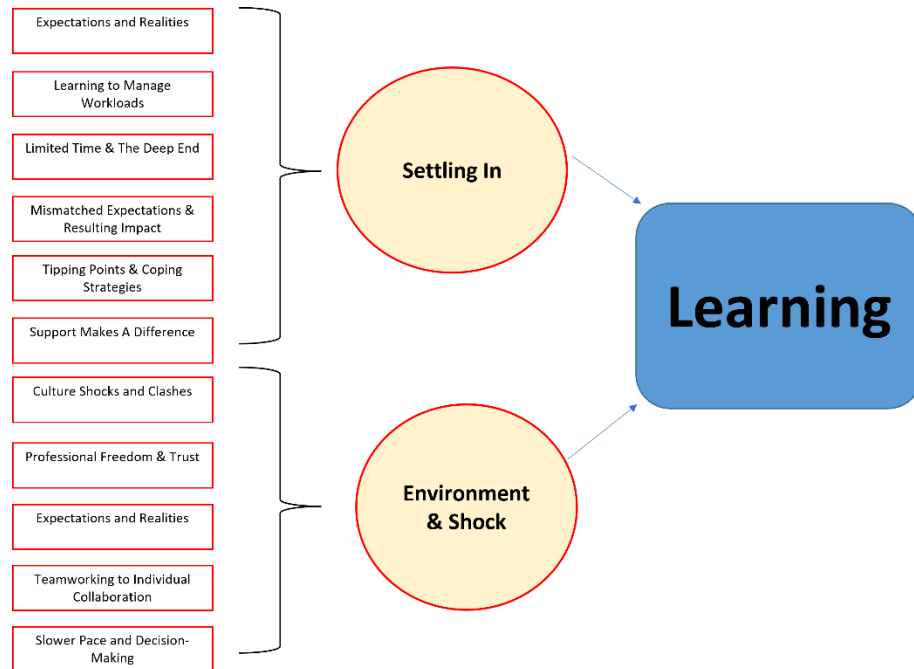
Assembly of Second-Cycle Coding to Determine the Pattern Codes

Analysis and Reflective Memo

*Reflective Analytical Memo (Analysis): chosen and used **pattern coding** to identify the emergent themes and to gain understanding. Remember that it is 'not only [used] to organize the corpus but attempt to attribute meaning to that organisation' (Saldana 2013:209).*

This conceptual level of coding was reached after going through the iteration of second-cycle coding where the text was turned and themed. This alerted me to the next level of analysis where the emerging themes from the stories about the experience of transition to become university academics from practice could be seen from the assembled codes. Those shown above as: realities ...; never reaching ...; preventing pitfalls ...; reshaping priorities ...; negative events ...; and cross[ing] other borders; all part of the move from another world (professional practice) to that of a new one (academic life) and all within the life course of existence – the pathway. It has become clear to me here that the experience of transition is complex, intricate, and relevant not just to professional practitioners but to the workplaces they occupy, the disciplines and to systems for effective transitioning. But for this research, from here, what is the overall message coming through and the last interpretation at this stage of the research process – the conceptual finding that has emerged or been captured in this study? Going back to Saldana (2013:212) reminds 'many codes – especially pattern codes – are captured in the form of metaphors' the interpretative glue which sticks the interpreted findings to a final theme, one that could be used to summarise and understand the experience of transition. In one word how can this experience be understood? Another step in the research process was needed. Return to literature to read about applicable coding methods at this level and for generating a final level of understanding.

Appendix 13 – Conceptual Level – Pattern Coding Example 2

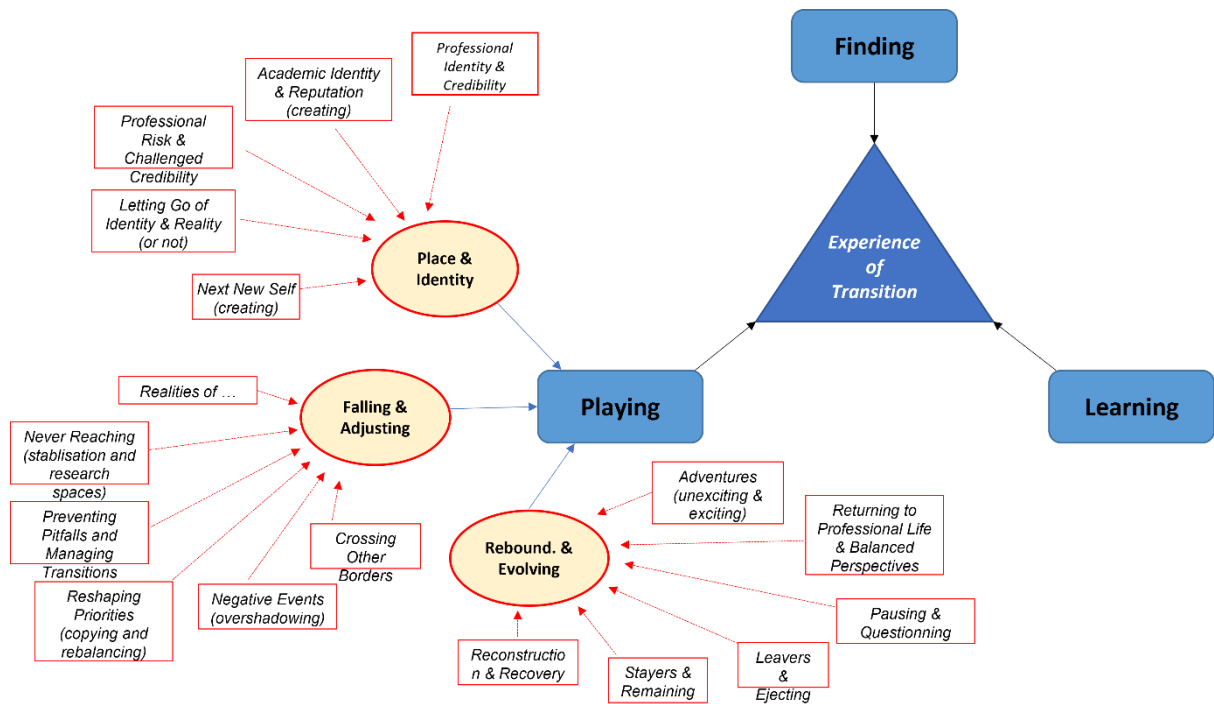


Analysis and Reflective Memo:

Pattern Coding = 'explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify an emergent themes, configuration or explanation. They pull together a lot of material into a more meaningful and parsimonious unit of analysis. They are a sort of meta-code ... Pattern Coding is a way of grouping those summaries into a smaller number of sets, themes, or constructs (Miles & Huberman 1994:69 cited by Saldana, 2013: 210).

The eleven meaningful themes emerging from the second-cycle analysis were clear findings (red boxes above) however to gain a clear understanding, a meaningful understanding about the experience of transition it was necessary to further refine and structure the data. This led to seeing two common overarching themes that of the stories related to 'SETTLING IN' and those related to 'ENVIRONMENT AND SHOCK', shown in the circles above. Throughout this part of the transitional journal learning could be noticed occurring. Reflecting further, and thinking, enabled thoughts to be collected and an overarching theme identified that of 'LEARNING'. A theme that appeared to sit in the middle of transition journey to become a university academic. Learning summed up the experience at that point and the stories of settling in and environment (and shock) expanded on what was known giving a different perspective to the transition cycles and transition literature reviewed in Chapter 2 of this Thesis. "LEARNING" made sense and was evident to see, and to claim, that this occurred during the transitional journey.

Appendix 14 – Conceptual Level – Pattern Coding Example 3



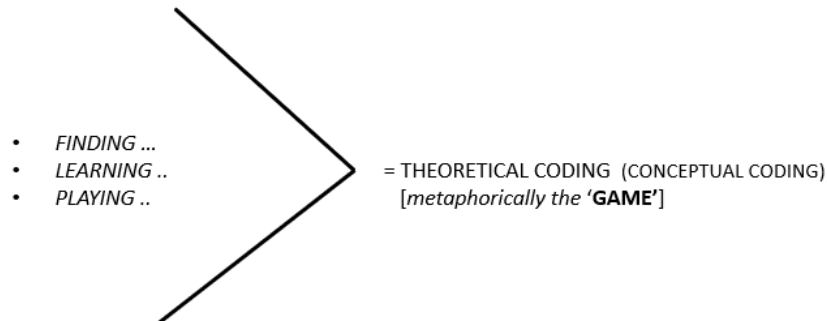
Assembly of Playing as part of Understanding Transition

Analysis and Reflective Memo:

The story began to take its final shape at this point, and I felt as if progress was at last being made. The move from the descriptive states of the interpretative process to the conceptual level was very interesting because I began to 'see' the experience of transition taking shape and meaning. The experience of transition was complex with many different types of components making up the final story about this experience, an experience that I began to see as a highly complex journey. One that was both collective with individual differences but an overall similarity that enabled findings to draw on that but not to forget the people's individual stories either. There quotes, feelings and reflections are key and are to be drawn into the final writing up of the thesis. Here gaining understanding of the experience of transition has shown it consist of the overarching interpreted themes of: **finding, learning and playing**. Finding their way into academic life and working, going through this learning and as part of a learning journey, and as confidence grew, realities struck or as new insights were gained then playing became part of the experience during the first five years in post. Linking to the theoretical lens of transition cycles, I could see that this compared with, and to a certain degree matched with, the terms used by Murray (2009): beginning, middle and end. But also with a narrative methodology, and a story, that themselves are known to have a beginning, middle and end – there was not 'plot' storyline here, but the story of the experience of transition as the journey of finding, learning and playing. But, (note to self) remaining lose to the purpose of this inquiry still means making sure I the research question can be answered. So, what is [or now was] the experience of professional practitioners making the transition to become an academic? Plus, how can this experience of transition from practice to academic life be better understood and how can this understanding lead to a better system of integrating the existing academic community and incoming practitioners as a 'team' to deliver quality higher education? Tomorrow, revisit the work of Lucas (Game in Academic Life) – is there a link to **"GAME THING"** and **"GAME"** (participant terms). As I am beginning to see, to recognise, the transition experience from the findings can be viewed as another part or other piece of the jigsaw referred to by Lucas in her work related to what she called the Research Game in Academic Life.

Here we start to see maybe the Teaching Game in Academic Life. Leaving open the Administration Game in Academic Life to be opened and followed but as part of another research project, not this one. Coming to mind also, as I reflect on the findings, is the connection to 'threshold concepts' (Meyer and Land) because the participants as I see it have many to cross as part of their personal journey and a collective one as part of the experience of transition. I am running out of wordcount to include it all in this thesis! But all really interesting.

Appendix 15 – Conceptual Level – Theoretical Coding

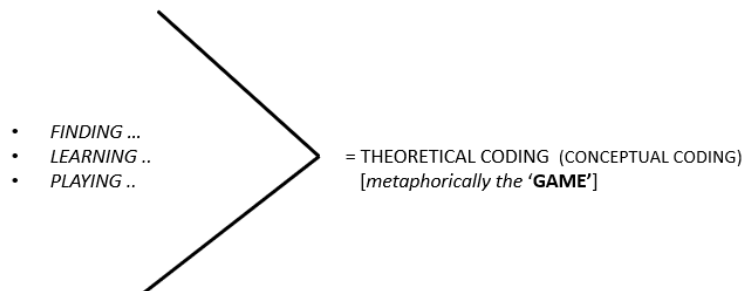


Assembled Conceptual (Theoretical) Coding – Understanding Transition

Analysis and Reflective Memo

*I have reached the 'outcome of this analytic cycle' (Saldana 2013:223) and deduced that the experience of transition to become university academics, from the perspectives of professional practitioners, can be viewed as a story with a beginning, middle and end (but not a finished): as *Finding, Learning and Playing*. But what was the overarching umbrella term emerging as the primary theme? I could see that there was a primary theme, one that did connect to the work of Lucas and with the terms of the participants but also with my own reflections on the experience of transition. A metaphorical connection: 'game'. Here this one word condenses everything else preceding preceded it into an understanding of the experience of transition. Transition is the vehicle that takes the practitioners through different life events and into a new life, another world, that of academic life and working. In a way, the next new career for them. The term game has different connotations for different people, as I have come to see it. This research ends with a systematic linking from the individual stories provided by the participants that through an interpretative process has helped to understand the experience of transition in another way. The interpretative research process, which ends with theoretical coding and a final reflection, has enabled me as the research instrument to move conceptually towards discovering a 'central/core category that identifies the primary theme of the research' (Salanda 2013:209). I have been allowed to finish and to draw together from a collective story about the transitional experience, things that are known to be important, new insights, quieter voices and some things that have resonated with me as part of my own experience or as I observed from my own academic practice. I am led next to thinking about how the systems of integration could be better. Whilst a 'game' comes with images of being fun, lively, and seen as good activity there is another side where drawbacks are not fun, not good, not for the common good, disadvantaging, and so on. Having reached the stage of a final theme I find there is more to think about! More to give consideration to as I come to write up the final part of this thesis. But for now, it does mean reflecting on this research, looking holistically at the experience of transition as told/re-told and reinterpreting this as a visual representation of the experience of transition because the purpose is to understand the experience of transition. What remained to be done was to move the conceptual level of analysis onwards to include the narration but also to enable 'seeing'. Presenting the experience of transition visually remains to be done, the last step in this interpretative process. What does the experience of transition look like and from that picture what does the image (concept) tell us, or add, to the narrative about the experience of transition as I transcend from this research?*

Appendix 16 – Conceptual Level – Theoretical Coding Game



Primary Term Overarching The Experience of Transition – Game

Visual Representation

The early-transition experience to become a university academic from practice:

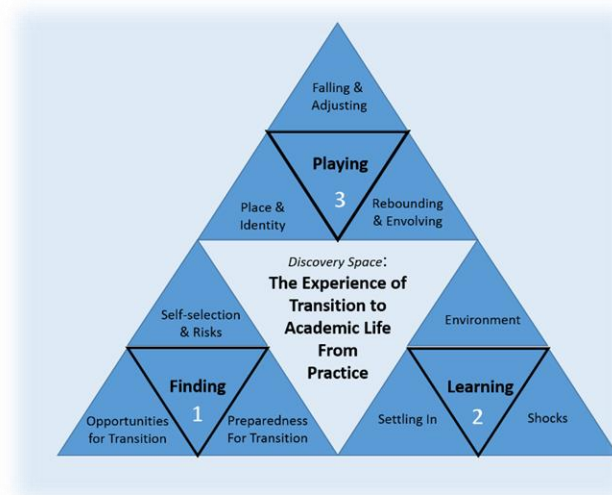


Figure xx. Conceptualising the Early-Transition Experience

The argument:

The conventional journey into an academic career is via the research route: undertaking a PhD and often post-doctoral research before securing a lecturing position. Implicitly if not always explicitly, this is the assumed default journey which underpins academic life and career progression. Entering higher education from professional practice is less common. If universities are to fully benefit from the expertise that practitioners bring, and they in turn are to achieve their career potential, universities need to recognise and support their specific needs and requirements.

Final Reflection and Memo:

The experience of transition can be deduced as a 'game'. A learning experience that is part of a course of life for some practitioner's but not all professional practitioners. It is moving a moving feast, that goes on past this inquiry, that is complex, filled with multiple perceptions but one overarching theme of a game and three underpinning themes of finding, learning and playing. It is a journey and experience that can be visually represented, understood and used to enhance systems and practices within Higher Education and to help those who wish to become university lecturers and academics specifically during the early-career stage, the first 5 years in post.

Appendix 17 – Diary Examples (During Interpretation)

Tuesday, 3rd September 2013 (First Progress Review Panel (PRP) Meeting)

Preparing and attending to my first PRP meeting to present my research and the progress I made during the first year of this study, to a panel of senior academics and registry, was adrenaline building and exciting all together. I knew what to expect because I had submitted the required documents as required but I did not know what to expect. It sounds silly because I knew I had to present my work, but I did not know what the questions would be, what the final assessed outcome would be or if I would be allowed to progress to the next year and stage. I had hoped to do well but this was a peer review process outside of my supervisory team where I had to talk about my researcher as a researcher at doctoral level to Professors and expert academic researchers. I survived, thankfully! Some really good discussion, feedback on ways to improve and I did come out feeling 'grilled' which people did say to expect. In a way, the PRP is training for the VIVA at the end. The report and results letter was issued with some minor changes, namely signing paperwork. I was asked to consider the work of Polkinghorne and in light of the progress I had made in year one the early suggestion was to now step back from the methodological framework/approach and to start thinking about the 'analysis of narrative' ... points for further reflection in the coming academic year 2013-2014. Afterwards, receiving encouraging and positive feedback from Registry and Supervisors congratulating me on a 'great performance' gave me the motivation to go on! I really appreciate everyone taking the time read my work, to write to me and to give me pointers ... next, I need to look ahead to sampling and selection of the participants ...

Tuesday, 13th May 2014 (Transcribing)

*All day I have been busy transcribing. I have decided to start the transcription process straightaway after the interviews so that all is fresh in my mind. Luckily, I learned how to touch type when I was younger! Reviewing the progress made this far, I've interviewed 21 participants, transcribed 15.5 recordings (the half *really* does make a difference!). A quick tally showed I have 3 more interviews meetings to go, and the stories collected so far show emerging similarities and differences. I thought I may not have enough when I began now I have so much word data, and so many great stories, from rich lived lives and experiences that it is going to be hard to 'know' what will be kept and cut out in the end. Choosing the most appropriate data analysis (interpretation method) is going to be key and a form of thematic analysis and coding appears as the most appropriate way forwards ... for now I am keeping my head down typing, I have discarded the foot pedal for transition ... it is a matter of head down and keep going which noticing things, thinking about things, and collecting things (NCT Model) ...*

Monday, 8th September 2014 (Second PRP Meeting)

Passing for the second year was a real confidence booster too especially as this related to the application of research methods which meant that I could continue with these, the interviews scheduled and then onto the other research stages. It is still strange to see the title of my PhD called 'PhD in Human Resource Management'. My topic fitted because it was about university lecturers who had made a transition to the workplaces and life of Higher Education, and in a way one view might be that they were 'employees' of an institution to be 'managed' but there was also the view that 'academics' are not to be managed. So, it was strange that receiving my notification of examination results provided a different thinking as I reflected on 'resource management' and began to gain insight ... The transitional journey and experience was not a straightforward one and the complexities with moving were surfacing as I progressed through the interpretation process and my own journey. Simply stopping to 'think' rather than keeping on 'doing' gave space. The pause that appeared to be as the needed 'pit stops', ones that were timely, good and needed. Without this, ideas would not be sparked, insights generated, myself considered and the participants' journey seen from new ways and ideas. Transition was intriguing, research was developing ... as was understanding more about the new world of work, academic life ...

Saturday, 22nd September 2014 (Conference Paper Accepted – Academic Identities)

*I was delighted to learn that the abstract I wrote for the conference in Durham was accepted! It was accepted with a slight revision but encouraging because the external feedback related to the findings of this study. 'This promises to be an interesting session. I strongly support this submission'. I found myself today reading over and over again the rest of the feedback and highlight the words that gave inspiration, provoked further thought and action: "I like very much the **focus on the professional to academic transition** which is the nub of this paper. **How to** support colleagues new to academia from the professions (or moving between the two) is an*

interesting puzzle. The interview data-set is likely to make for a good deal of provocative discussion. There are some aspects of the abstract which need revising and editing ...'. But there was interest in this study which has made a big difference to me and to going on with the research. I spent ages considering the title and what the 'contribution' I could make would be. It was right to go with Made Clearer by the Dozen: Expressing an Academic Identity for the First Time. The paper shared the preliminary findings of this study telling the tale of twelve early-career academics who were finding their next 'identity' and in particular their 'academic identity' ... who do they say that they now are? How do they express their new identity? ... The 'blind self' and 'unknown self' (Ingham and Luft, 1995) linked to the Johari Window model ... this is a good development opportunity for me because the university holding the conference is very different to the one that I have worked at and studied at so it will be interesting to see how this paper is received and to get feedback and questions from the academic community. No doubt, this will spark more contemplation about the move from practice to becoming a university academic and into academic life and work ... a different perspective and different experiences of this.

Thursday, 31 July 2014 (Updated Methodology – Coding Section)

Finished writing the update to this chapter 'to code or not to code', more 'how to' code for a narrative study and sent for peer review to the supervisory team. Writing is taking over, and re-writing to reduce wordcounts, so I am having to decline requests to write a chapter in an edited book or to write journal articles. The focus, and the most important thing now, is to write and make sure I finish my thesis first. Other writing can come after. I find myself, considering and reflecting on 'Andrews (2013:75) 'one of the central elements of narrative research is the analysis of key themes that help to organise the way a life story is told' pointing to the work of Plummer (2001) and to McAdams (1997) who showed "themes cluster around recurrent content in stories". Identifying repeated data provided 'a useful means of identifying key themes which may be, but do not have to be, stories of events' (Andrews 2013:75)' Also, "qualitative codes are essence-capturing and essential elements of the research story that, when clustered together according to similarity and regularity (a pattern), they actively facilitate the development of categories and thus analysis of their connections" (Saldana, 2013:8). Coding "leads from the data to the idea, and from the idea to all the data pertaining to that idea" (Saldana, 2013:8 see Richards & Morse, 2007:7). I realised that 'coding is not a precise science; it is primarily and interpretive act' (Saldana, 2013:4). That being, an interpretative act that many different researchers (qualitative methodologists) are involved in but that each could interpret the same data in a very different way even if the exact same coding or theming methods were applied. However, care was needed because "Narrative data [could] easily seem overwhelming: susceptible to endless interpretation, by turns inconsequential and deeply meaningful" (Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou, 2013:1). Time was limited withing the constraints of a PhD study, with full-time academic work and a life. Nevertheless, the more I looked at the experience of transition, thought about it and became more deeply involved in the interpretation process the more I enjoyed researching but the problem was wordcount all the way through ...

Monday, 9th November 2015 (Participant – Cathartic Experience)

Today I bumped into one of the participants and she came across to me as she remembered reading the transcript and the interview meeting. Of note was that she said that the interview, and reading her 'story' back to herself, had changed her and her direction. She had enrolled to do a PhD, had started writing and going to international conferences to present joint research with her colleagues. But more so, she said it came at the right time in life because it made her stop and think about what was going on, where she was going and what she wanted from life – a working life and a family life. She said that she found the entire experience of being involved in the study not just reflective but also 'cathartic' for her. It was a good story to hear outside of the interview but whilst I was still amid the research process. I had not expected this, nor had I expected to find that the research process was cathartic for some people. I had expected a degree of reflection but not the other. But on reflection, for me, when rehearing the stories, it was at time emotional as memories were unsurfaced, both good and bad, which was reminded of today. I enter this in my diary today because it is useful to note, not for publishing, but to recall as part of the process as well as to see how far I have travelled in my own academic career, where to next for me and to identify what can be learned from the experience.

Appendix 18 – Journal Example (During Interpretation)

Wednesday, 7th January 2015

There is a difference between my personal diary, the analytical research memo and the researchers journal. The diary is a one off memo as I see it that is personal, not for publication and that records or notes thinking or aspects of importance along the journey of the research process from start to end. The memo is used during the interpretation process especially here in this study to consider the ways in which thinking has moved, choices made and new questions developed as part of the process of interpretation. There I go from coding through the methodological process in order to transcend from the data with an understanding of the experience of transition. A journal though is different again, it is where I note and go back to find other key readings and information that I did not have time to today or to record the ones that I did not want to lose links to, the ones to return to in the future either for this study or after this study has completed. I have the choice of using a word document on my computer but that is not very mobile unless I consider using the cloud at the same time. An entry should be made each time I sit down doing my research, such as now! There are template examples that can be used, for example:

Research Topic:

Date:

Where I searched:

Sources I found and how I might use them:

Or I have the option to select a journaling app for my phone so that it is with me on the move. Or I could set up a blog. Or keep a paper notebook. In the end, I decided to use a template as I have little time to invest in researching, learning and setting up a journaling app but after this thesis I will do that.

Example:

Research Topic:	Thematic Analysis and Coding
Date:	29 June 2014
Where I searched:	Books: Research Literature, Qualitative Research Literature, Academic Development Research Literature, Qualitative Data Analysis, Coding Manuals for Researchers Locate: University's Online Research Facility Google: Google Scholar
Sources I found:	<i>A Hybrid Approach to Thematic Analysis in Qualitative Research: Using a Practical Example</i> (Swain, 2018), see https://methods.sagepub.com/case/hybrid-approach-thematic-analysis-qualitative-research-a-practical-example Friede, S. (2014) <i>Qualitative Data Analysis with ATLAS.ti</i> . 2 nd edn. London: Sage Saldana, J. (2013) <i>The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers</i> . 2 nd edn. London: Sage Yin, R. (2016) <i>Qualitative Research from Start to Finish</i> . 2 nd edn. York: The Guildford Press Boyatzis, R. (1998) <i>Transforming Qualitative Information: Thematic Analysis and Code Development</i> . London: Sage Braun, V., Clarke, V. (2019) <i>Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis</i> , <i>Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health</i> , 11:4, 589-597, DOI: 10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806 [online] < https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806 > ...
How I might use them:	Identify which coding and theming methods are most appropriate for the research level that I reach as I move through the interpretation process from transcription to conceptualisation and for comparing theoretical lenses (e.g. the best to use and the 'transition cycle' (Murray, 2009)

Appendix 19 –Member Feedback Examples (Member Checking)

Member A - post-92 (Not Pursuing A Doctorate)

'... it was good to be given the opportunity to read about the experiences of others and to see the similarities in relation to my own. I would not have changed the career pathway that led me to becoming an academic at the institution I am affiliated with. However, I do realise that a transition to become an academic and to leave a secure personal and professional life is not the road for everyone especially, as 'Simon' mentioned those in the earlier years of developing as a professional or growing a professional career. Academic life, without a doctorate or a list of your own research publications, is not a level playing field. Professional expertise does not count in the same way as research expertise. - you really do need to make sure you are clear about your future pathway otherwise making the transition can see you becoming 'stuck' or being viewed differently to other academics. Professional practice experience, once you are inside an academic workplace cannot be extended or maintained without giving this real thought and continuing to work with the different groups of people. It is a risky move but for me it was worth it. I no longer see this as a career move or career opportunity in the sense that I previously understood the development of a career to be in professional life. Back then I associated a professional career with opportunities to progress, to climb the career ladder and to be recognised for the work you did and the difference you made. Here, the reality, is that it is not an upward career path but one that is horizontal. There is nowhere to go, no 'real' career path that leads onwards (or upwards) from practice but there is job satisfaction to be found. This comes by knowing what you are interested, finding work that intellectually stimulates you, that makes a difference and that enables you to develop the passion you have for your discipline. Without this, and seeing the future generation of professional practitioners change and 'become' graduates, or the ability to be involved in interesting projects or new innovations academic life would not be something that would provide a continuing or viable workplace. I would not move into this type of work in my 30's or early 40's but it has been something that I found of interest in life when I was already established professionally and well networked in my own professional field. You need to keep connected to both 'worlds' because disconnecting from professional practice or your networks to cross over entirely to academic work may mean that a person finds themselves having stumbled on a job where they cannot move forward, upwards or go backwards into practice the longer they remain within the academic working environment - which is not an advisable place to reach in any professional career or financially. I felt that the Early-Transition Cycle was representative. I found the stories about the transitional journey made for an interesting read. It was good to read this work, thank you. Is this any different for other paths that lead into an academic career for example researchers', managers' or others'?

Member C - post-92 (Pursuing A Doctorate)

Thank you for the opportunity to read your thesis. This is really so interesting. I can definitely see my journey in the stories told in these chapters from so many other people's perspectives. I read on to the conceptual framework and I can see how these phases connect the emotions with the operational aspects of the role and the environment. Some specific themes that resonated most with me are below. I hope this helps with your final stage. Do let me know if you need anything else.

- **Finding:** Preparation from the professional life leading into Finding an academic career. I was thinking about the point of qualifications and doing this in my industry life. I wasn't conscious that this could play a part in Finding an academic career and it was a surprise that this facilitated the transition. Doing a qualification was an unusual activity amongst my industry colleagues at the time but made a big difference to being able to become an

academic. Finding the career as a result of going back into education as a student and seeing this with different eyes to when I was an 18 year old. This represented much more about shaping and helping others than teaching. The importance of someone else to encourage and build confidence that the role would be right and that I could make the transition. Intrinsic motivators and didn't really think of the financials. First delivery. Yes, there is this feeling of being in it alone when in fact you are surrounded by many people who have been there before. There is a gap between the support the institution can give and does give in those early days. I think there is also an element of self-reliance that you alone need to make it work as part of the process.

- **Learning:** Wanting to help others and having many fingers in pies - also because it is possible and people are open to your offers of help. There was also a vacuum and I could see how to fill it. With excessive workloads, it is some of those intrinsic motivators from Finding that keep you going through the long days and heavy workloads. Physical cost of being thrown into the deep end is not something I expected. I do connect with the statement that the focus at this point is on doing and less about thinking about yourself. Team versus community - yes! Thinking about this now, it was the other practitioner-to-academic colleagues who got this difference more so than the 'academics'. And this was quite a unifying factor for us. As a result, we created our own 'informal' support network as a team substitute so that we could keep that feeling. I still want that even now but I've become accustomed to not having it now.
- **Playing:** Yes - seeing myself as an unfinished product was absolutely my mindset! This was in part from learning that students are coming as unfinished and leaving unfinished - but forming all the same. I think this forming became a part of how I reflected in my own career and academic identity. This is connected with realising the importance of pausing, reflecting on where you are and what you want from your life/career, and whether those Finding attributes are still there in enough quantity to keep going.

Thank you for the chance to participate in your study. Good luck with the final stages, Louise. You are my inspiration!

Appendix 20 – Peer Review Examples

Disinterested Friend Feedback, post-92

“A very interesting study and having read the work I became more aware of the importance of transition and these experiences in relation to academic life, careers and myself. I found, even though I had been an academic for a number of years, that I was learning something new about this subject and my own journey – new aspects I had not thought about before relating to myself and about the importance of understanding transitional experiences. I did not come from practice so the insights were useful. I have no suggestions for improvements to the text but I would say that this research thinking applies to those becoming academics from research routes as I can recognise where situations, experiences, perceptions and feelings apply to this type of research route as well. Please do not think or assume that your study is only connecting to those from the professional practice entry route into academic life/careers. Having read the thesis, I see how it relates to me and to others who have taken research or study routes to become academics, teachers and researchers. Phase two (learning) and three (playing) had real meaning and I found myself taking more time to digest the experiences shared. This subject makes an interesting topic for the future and I suggest there is continuing research work to pursue. The model you created (Early-Transition Cycle) is one that I have found to be very useful and an interesting way to think about, and illustrate, the transition experience and entry into an academic career generally. Overall, reading this thesis has helped me understand the diversity and complexities involved in the journey of others and in relation to myself as a person who has already passed through the early-career phase of my career. I found myself developing a new understanding and reflecting on my own journey, my future career pathway and focusing on the areas I wish to develop further in my own practice. I would be interested to read future journal articles that follow and I would encourage you to continue with this field of work. Please revisit the text for typo’s and as a ‘disinterested friend’ not from this route, and who came to be an academic from another discipline area, I found myself becoming very much an ‘interested friend’ in understanding the experience of transition and others! I really enjoyed reading it and many thanks for giving me the opportunity of being your disinterested friend.”

Critical Friend 2, post-92

“Genuinely, I found this to be an interesting study and one that I deem to be of use. It made me think, reflect and appreciate more the experience of transition and the impact this has – its importance. Particularly Learning in Chapter 6 and 7 Playing, were important to me because of the understanding gained and resonance with my journey. Reading about transitional experiences was timely because it provided the impetus to reflect on my current position and helps me to understand more about my colleagues from alternative routes. I have done some quite deep thinking about my own personal situation, the direction of my future academic career and where my next focus (career ambitions) lay. I had not expected this to be a result of reading this thesis and the model of the early-transition cycle was useful e.g. I was able to connect and locate my own position within this. The work I believe has value and is useful to recruitment/induction practices, policy, conversations and the way theory/models relating to making transition are utilised. I consider myself to be an experienced academic who has been part of an active academic life for a number of years. Reading your work has brought new understandings, different insights and a personal benefit. For improvement, I suggest you group your recommendations under the headings of theory, policy and practice before providing a final reflection – the what next? Consider who else might find this thinking and the new model useful e.g. is it limited to post-92s or does it have a wider implication?”