

The Expert to Novice Transition

Coping Strategies For New
Academics

The Project Findings

Participants experienced

- Unstable Professional Identity
- Loss and grief – denial, anger, mood swing, depression , recovery,
- Feeling deskilled
- Feelings of disorientation
- Feelings of not belonging
- Feeling alone

Belonging and Becoming:

the Search for Identity and Community

Personal Journey

- Losses
- Unfamiliar Territory
- Confusion
- Lack of Support and Guidance
- Self Doubt
- Loss of Status
- Fear of Failure
- Feelings of Disloyalty

- Lack of Avenues of Expression
- Recovery

A New Language and Culture

*You've jumped ship into a foreign country,
you haven't got a map, you haven't got
any of the local currency – you don't know
what it is anyway, you don't speak the
language and it's pissing with rain*

Different Places

Health and Social Care

Settings

- Professional identity well established, overt and team orientated
- Culture hierarchical, overt and compliant
- Communities of practice clear
- Training and induction are formal and monitored

Universities

- Professional Identity less clearly defined, more individualistic and competitive
- Culture hierarchical, covert, idiosyncratic and critical
- Communities of practice not so easily identified.
- Training and induction are varied and frequently unmonitored

Life Course Theory

- The term life course indicates the journey through life from start to finish including all changes and stages integrated and discrete. Life course theory provides a robust framework in that it helps divide complicated concepts into smaller, logically related and more manageable chunks (Sugarman L., 2001).

A Holistic Approach

- The theme identified by Skovholt's 2001 work, in which he suggests that personal life is a central component of professional functioning, emphasises the importance of the life course and life events as the individual works from beginner to senior practitioner, and indeed from senior practitioner to beginner.

The Social Clock

Neugarten (1964, 1973, 1977, 1996) asserts that to do something at the time set by the social clock brings much less stress than to do something 'off time'. It might be said that becoming a novice practitioner in a new field of enterprise when one is expected by society, by ones cohorts and by oneself, to be an expert is 'off time' and therefore the change concomitantly more stressful. Helen Bee (1997) goes as far as to suggest that there are three key predictors of life satisfaction – adequate social support, adequate financial resources and lack of unplanned or off time events.

Strategies – Understand your Situation

- Be Prepared! Bridges (2003) distinguished three stages in the transition process: an ending, followed by a period of confusion and distress, leading to a new beginning: *‘Endings and beginnings, with emptiness and germination in between’*. (Bridges, W., 2003, p. 150).
- The expert to novice transition is not uncommon
- Why are you here ?
 - to be in HE?
 - Not to be in health and social care
 - Because it fits with your life stage needs

Formal Strategies

- Induction – concrete information you need in a format you can use.
- Mentoring
- Buddying
- Skill development – developing mastery
- Facilitation a new community of practice

Informal strategies

- Valuing our own expertise and skills
- Developing Partnerships
- Informal contacts with new colleagues – and old ones
- Negotiating transition and developing mastery happens in stages – it takes time!
- Allow yourself to belong to more than one community of practice.

The 4 S System

- Self
- Strategies
- Social Support
- Situation

(Schlossberg N *et al.* 1995)

Stability Zones

- In difficult and changing times of whatever level these areas of personal significance and value operate as anchors, or stability zones (Toffler, A., 1975; Open University, 1992; Pedler, M. *et al.*, 2001) that we depend on when all else is confused, uncertain and frightening. They are frequently associated with
 - people,
 - activities, ideas/values and beliefs,
 - places,
 - things
 - organizations.

Adjustments

- Developing Mastery
- Increasing roles outside your professional area
- Accepting more than one community of practice
- Keeping continuity in other important areas of life
- *'effective coping means flexible utilization of a range of strategies as each situation demands'* (Schlossberg *et al.*, 1995, p. 74)

Action Learning Sets

In groups of 3 or 4

- Reflect on your experience
- Identify key areas to work on

In Pairs

Identify some strategies
for use in your key areas
of concern