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The challenges of academic development as a first graduate job: ‘Am I doing it right?’

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The challenges of academic development as a first graduate job: 'Am I doing it right?'

This article explores the experience of ten graduate interns employed in an academic development team at a modern British university. The interns came from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds with no previous experience of academic development. We worked intensively with them to build their research and professional capabilities. They learnt to design questionnaires, lead focus groups, interview academics, and write ethnographic field-notes. The public-facing and visible achievements of the graduate interns told a brilliant story; behind the scenes they wrestled with the challenges of being and becoming. Here we analyse a series of reflections charting their journeys as new professionals.

Key words: academic development; graduate interns; professionalism; educational research

The back story of our graduate interns

In April 2017, the head of the University's employability team approached us about taking on ten graduate interns for six months to help with research on the 'Transforming the Experience of Students through Assessment' (TESTA) project, which one of the authors leads, and is being rolled out institutionally. The ten interns constituted almost one fifth of the university's graduate intern scheme, which recruited 55 interns in total for 2017/18. Their home disciplines were Psychology, Film and TV, Geography, Popular Music, Fashion and Computing. Our institute for learning and teaching includes a small academic development team, learning technology, and library staff.

The intern scheme bears testimony to the University's very real commitment to graduate employability, which is writ large in the DNA of an institution with an intake of 70% first generation university students, most at the more diverse and economically

disadvantaged end of the spectrum. The scheme is also an expedient measure to increase our scores on the national Destination and Leavers from Higher Education Survey (DLHE) which is a key metric in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). The TEF is the government's strategy to raise the bar on teaching, measuring and categorising universities as bronze, silver or gold according to a range of metrics, some relating to teaching and others to student processes and outcomes, which have less bearing on teaching quality (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills 2016). Like our colleagues across the institution, we were determined to make a virtue of the scheme in emphasising the added value we could bring to developing graduates' capacities and capabilities, rather than simply doing the needful with the DLHE survey.

We selected graduates with good grades in their degrees, and were robust about only selecting those whom we felt could make a significant contribution to our agenda. We were prepared to have fewer than ten interns rather than take on those who might not cope with the demands of the role. As a result, we interviewed in two tranches with the first intake of six graduates beginning in September, and the second intake of four, starting in November.

Diving into the deep end of academic development

The graduate interns arrived expecting to conduct educational research, as outlined in the job description. In reality, all the interns contributed to two strategic institutional initiatives: first, an assessment and feedback project (TESTA) which focuses on collecting programme data about the planned curriculum through an audit conversation with course leaders, and questionnaire and focus group data from final year undergraduate students. This research is crafted into a case study which forms the catalyst for an academic developer-led change process, drawing connections across modules of study and years. The lead author led a training day with the interns, and mentored them through the process on seven participating

programmes. The interns' primary responsibility was collecting student data, writing up the case study with guidance, and helping to negotiate the evidence with teams, from a recent student perspective.

The interns contributed to a second institution-wide research and change process led by our institute, namely developing a curriculum framework using theory, research and consultation with key stakeholders to identify its core elements. The interns helped organise nine curriculum cafes with 183 staff members attending, and collected comments from n=900 students about a proposed framework on a curriculum wall in a public university space. We secured ethical approval from the university for the interns to write ethnographic field-notes about discussions at the curriculum cafes, which fed into our deliberations about the final framework, against which all courses are to be reviewed over the next three years. Outside of these two major projects, individual interns contributed to other projects, such as promoting attendance at the British Conference for Undergraduate Research (BCUR) and supporting undergraduate students in writing abstracts and making posters for the same through peer feedback. They were also called on to help with tasks at peak times when we were short-staffed, for example conducting IT inductions for new students, or transcribing research interviews.

As academic developers, we focused on equipping the interns to undertake defined research tasks, for example data collection and analysis as part of TESTA. We also explored curriculum theory and ethnographic research skills for the new curriculum framework; we met weekly and engaged in joint problem-solving of knotty issues encountered in undertaking research. At the start of the internship we led a two day workshop to introduce the interns to the team, our research projects and ways of working. We met every Tuesday to discuss progress, problems and projects. Our workshops and meetings were creative and lively; we encouraged reflection through completing regular Critical Incident Questionnaires

(Brookfield, 1995), and each intern wrote blog posts about their experiences. In the process of collecting and reviewing the critical incident questionnaires, we became aware that we were asking the interns to embark on a more complex endeavour than simply being research assistants. In retrospect, the six-month graduate internship was an initiation into the mysteries of academic development.

It did not take us long to realise that entering our world was disturbing to the graduate interns, positioned as it is in the uncomfortable and 'unhomely' space between being bottom-up and being the foot soldiers of managers (Manathunga, 2007); and between the much vaunted world of 'the student experience' and the less celebrated realities of blame, cynicism and despair displayed by some academics about apparent student resistance to engaging in academic work. Within this uneasy liminal space, we struggled to articulate clearly our own perceptions and the difficult micro-politics of *being* academic developers, both to ourselves and to the graduate interns. We embodied tacit knowledge in knowing 'more than we can tell' about our practice as academic developers (Polanyi, 1966). To that extent we expected graduate interns to come to an understanding of academic development through tacit and intuitive processes, without explicitly surfacing our assumptions, and revealing why and how we did what we did, for example, surrendering our 'claims to being an "authority" on teaching and learning' and acknowledging 'some of the unresolved dilemmas and tensions embedded in all aspects of teaching and learning' (Manathunga, 2006, p.26). While we did emphasise that academic development work was political work, in retrospect, we did not go far enough.

As a team, we diverge slightly from an altogether post-colonial interpretation of academic development. While we use conversation and dialogue with academics in mutually respectful ways as our stock in trade (Grant, 2007; Manathunga, 2007), we believe in bringing evidence, theory and practical experience from across disciplines, degree

programmes and universities. Gibbs' depiction of systemic, evidence-led, strategic and departmental approaches to bring about enhancements in learning and teaching resonates with us (Gibbs, 2013, p.10). Our epistemology spans wider than cognitive psychology, and goes beyond phenomenography with its individualistic approach (Manathunga, 2006). We are more at home in sociology than psychology and we endeavour to speak truth to power. We feel that we have hard-won expertise to share, which enables us both to challenge managerial agendas and to abandon depictions of ourselves as apologetic wallflowers waiting for academics to ask us to dance. Intuitively, our graduate interns may have begun to piece together the nature of academic development from our unspoken professions. That said, we became increasingly conscious that at times we were leading them down a woodland pathway without the benefit of a map or compass.

***Being* and *becoming*: the theory**

The idea of *being* and *becoming* takes its cue from the professions, and particularly teacher education, to elucidate frameworks and concepts which are applicable in any professional setting. We know that expertise grows over time and with experience. Dreyfus (2004) suggests a linear trajectory from novice to expert, whilst Kuhlmann and Ardichvili (2015) argue that it is more complicated than that. Expertise comes from sustained engagement with work that is high stakes and non-routine. In addressing increasingly complex, real-world problems, 'the professional learns from each successful episode' (Ibid., p.271).

There are several difficulties here. First, the idea that the learning trajectory from novice to expert is linear belies the complex realities of the journey. There is a messiness about the process that neatly contained models do not fully acknowledge. Secondly, the focus

on problems masks the role of others in the learning process. Eraut (2013) notes the human dimension, arguing that working alongside more experienced others results in higher levels of learning, largely because there is much about professional work that is 'tacit and difficult to explain' (Ibid., p.9). Finally, if learning was dependent only on 'successful episodes', a great deal that is problematic and, at times, unsuccessful in professional practice would be of little value. For the graduate interns, and for us as their line managers, we often learnt more from those episodes that were, in purely instrumental terms, far from successful.

Writing about teaching as a professional discipline, Squires (1999) draws on teaching theories to explore the relationships between theory and practice; knowledge and know-how; and how these translate into complex processes of decision-making and problem-solving (Ibid., p.23). He makes the case that professional work in any context has three characteristics:

- **Instrumentality:** 'aiming at an effect beyond itself, in trying to bring about some change of facilitate some effect, which may be a palpable artefact (a bridge or building) or a change of state or condition' (Ibid., p.24-25)
- **Contingency:** The fact that professional work is influenced by things around it, that 'it is not in a vacuum', but embedded, situated, contextual, particular, and needs consideration in time and space on a case by case basis. Contingency calls for quite sophisticated professional judgements to be made, out of a repertoire distilled from past cases (Ibid., p.26)
- **Procedurality:** that each profession has a vocabulary and 'way of doing what it does: a repertoire of approaches, tools, materials, techniques' which range from using equipment, software and tools, to deploying subtler soft skills which form part of the

'collective professional wisdom and culture' (Ibid., p 26-27).

Becoming professional, especially making judgements which are contingent on the context, requires reflection. In our experience, reflective practice is central to *becoming* professional. Schön (1983, p.18) argues that professional knowledge alone is inadequate for situations of practice, which are characterised by 'complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict'. He critiques reliance solely on professional knowledge as a form of technical rationality, as it implies that the rigorous application of theory and evidence can be used to solve complex professional problems. Instead, the reflective practitioner is adept at being able to 'surface and criticize the tacit understandings' that exist in any given profession, responding to and learning from the situations (Ibid, p.61). Similarly, Brookfield (1995, p.1) offers reflection as a critical process, with the potential to question beliefs, values and assumptions.

Reflection is central to the activities of a community of practice; it is a process by which the community both embeds existing practices and explores new possibilities (Wenger, 1998). Within such a community, 'knowledge is emergent and experts in the group are facilitators' (Cowan, 2012, p.12). Lave and Wenger (1991) explore what is essentially a process of *becoming* as they describe how newcomers' participation in the community of practice results in their learning being 'configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.29). In other words, social practice, the way in which systems operate, and identity, are worked out through participation in the community (Wenger, 1998, p.13). The process is not top-down: new and experienced members negotiate meaning and jointly construct the knowledge and practices of the community.

The theoretical lens we have used here, while mainly emanating from teacher and

adult education, has resonance for graduate interns in the process of becoming academic developers, even on short-term contracts. Academic development is complex work, involving educational principles and political acts. On the one hand, as academic developers, we strive to diminish power hierarchies and work alongside and learn from our discipline-based colleagues; on the other, we are accountable to senior managers, intent on ensuring the survival and success of teaching and the student experience within a neoliberal world, with a keen eye on metrics and unit costs. What counts as success in one world, is not always seen as success in the other. We straddle these strange parallel universes.

Our research method: reflections on critical incidents

We used a qualitative approach involving reflective questions adapted from Brookfield's Critical Incident Questionnaire (Brookfield, 1995) to help us capture the significant moments of the interns' experience of *being* and *becoming*. Having gained ethical clearance, we invited the interns to respond to the five open-ended, reflective questions on the Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) at four points during the six month internship. Their responses were submitted to an administrative officer who anonymised and uploaded them to a secure folder. Altogether the graduate interns completed 40 CIQs. We used each iteration to inform our leadership of the group, as feedback to help us respond to any brewing troubles as they arose. The five CIQ questions were:

1. What has been the most engaging moment of your internship so far?
2. At what moment during the internship have you felt most distanced?
3. What action that anyone has taken during the internship has been most affirming and helpful?
4. What action that anyone has taken that has been most puzzling or confusing?

5. What about the internship has surprised you the most?

To make the process of reflection shared and democratic, we completed CIQs ourselves to feed back to the graduate interns in a two-way process. Only the three authors completed all four CIQs, with other permanent staff members only occasionally responding, leaving a total of 14 usable CIQ reflections from the leaders' perspective. For the authors, the completion of CIQs provided much needed reflective space. It forced us to think through the challenges the graduates were facing in *being* and *becoming* academic developers, and to be inventive and responsive in our regular Tuesday team meeting. Given the relationship of trust we had built up, we were able to reflect honestly and without high degrees of self-censorship. Two of the interns have thematically analysed 14 leaders' CIQs, 12 of which are the authors' in order to write a parallel article about their experience, with high degrees of transparency about the origins of the data.

We transcribed the written CIQs to text and uploaded them to Nvivo, the University's licensed qualitative software. We coded the data using the principles of thematic analysis, being open to generative codes from the data as well as codes linked to theories of *being* and *becoming*, particularly Squires' constructs of instrumentality, contingency and procedurality (Ibid., 1999). In essence, we combined generative open coding, an inductive process from the grounded theory tradition (Strauss, 1987) with more deductive theoretical coding.

***Being* and *becoming*: the practice**

We identified three main themes in the data. The first expresses interns' anxieties about their roles, including tensions between freedom and structure, and understanding the language of academic development; the second illustrates aspects of *becoming* a professional such as gaining confidence and agency in the process of crossing over from being a student to

a professional; the third reflects on the challenges of team-working. We have used pseudonyms in reporting the data.

Anxieties about academic development: Am I doing this right?

The graduate interns' job descriptions listed research tasks as the mainstay of their roles. In reality, the tasks were more complex and messier than neatly defined research packages. We provided support to help them become more surefooted about undertaking these tasks, which they found helpful:

> Q: What has been most affirming or helpful?
> A: Probably the Tuesday meetings as these help to know what we are all working on and if we have any questions we can ask them. This means that we are all on the same page, and that we can work things out if a project is stuck. (Melody)

> The occasional meetings about various projects (almost like a check-in) have been the most helpful as it helps me understand if I am on the right path or not, and if not how to get back on track. (Jamie)

Unsurprisingly though, the interns expressed anxieties about doing the right thing and felt the need of reassurance, especially early on:

> It is very beneficial to hear positive feedback when you are doubting yourself, especially at the beginning. (Rosa)

Tracey identified differences between professional work and more well-defined university assignments. The ambiguity of tasks led to a slow-down in productivity, in the struggle to know what was required:

> The times I have felt most distanced was when we didn't know where we were going with our projects. I guess it's getting used not having the direction that you get given at uni, and this is something I think we have all struggled with to some degree. It's the constant "Am I doing this right?" thought you have… the ambiguity of tasks has often caused confusion and uncertainty amongst the team. (Tracey)

Underlying some of these anxieties was a rule bound perception of professional tasks, a dualistic mind set akin to Perry's first stage of intellectual development at university (Perry, 1970). New graduates seemed reluctant to make self-authored decisions even when encouraged to do so by their line managers, as evidenced here:

> Despite enjoying the TESTA work, there was a sense of "am I doing the right thing?" regarding categorising as our themes were fairly different to the typical TESTA framework. Although we were reassured that changing the themes would be a good thing, it can be hard to tell when is the right time to stray from the rules as it is unclear what should be set in stone in terms of the work. (Dan)

The interns wrestled with the balance between freedom and structure for the duration of the internship, but especially in the early days. They celebrated the flexibility of making decisions about what to do when, the diversity of tasks, and having options which enabled them to pursue different lines of inquiry. On the other hand, they were daunted and frustrated by not just being told what to do. Their reflections illustrate these mixed feelings:

> The lack of supervision was quite surprising as I was expecting quite a regular stream of tasks and check-ins when we first started. The freedom was unusual and may have resulted in a lack of work but we actually became quite self-motivating, organising our own meetings and discussing how we should go about our newly received projects. (Dan)

> When I first started the role, I wrongly assumed that we would be working with a lot of structure, with very little freedom over what we looked into. That said, this freedom is also daunting at times, we have to decide how to spend our time each day, and what needs to be done. At times more structure to the days would be welcomed. (Tracey)

The short duration of the internship compounded performance anxieties. It contributed to our unrealistic expectations about quite nuanced academic development skills. As long-term academic developers, we have a repertoire of previous cases to draw on, which

have taken years to build (Squires 1999, p.26). Our tacit assumption was that these skills could somehow be microwaved in a six-month internship. Dan identified the problem:

> While treating the interns the same as the long-term employers in the context of these meetings and discussions can feel comforting, it creates the expectation that we should know as much as them despite our short time here. (Dan)

To introduce them to our knowledge domain, they read and we discussed relevant literature together, but we underestimated the huge leaps the interns were making as new graduates, from their different home disciplines into the world of academic development:

> The most puzzling and confusing was to understand all the academic language and way of thinking at the beginning of the internship. It took a while and required a lot of reading and analysing to get the required mind-set and knowledge. (Rosa)

The interns were entering a different disciplinary discourse with new technical language and different ways of generating knowledge from their home disciplines, akin to learning the procedures, know-how and vocabulary which Squires (1999) describes as ‘procedurality’. Their reflections demonstrated the leap they were making to cross over into the world of academic development.

No longer a student: reflections on becoming

Intern reflections highlighted different aspects of *becoming* professional. These ranged from developing confidence in the face of unexpected tasks and challenges, to feelings of elation at completing tasks, to the thrill of making a difference, to new ways of seeing the University. To varying degrees, all of these milestones on the road to *becoming* took place within a community of practice, through learning from one another and from rubbing shoulders with ‘old hands’. But interns also described more personal development.

Chloe described her transition to professionalism as being about self-knowledge, confidence and taking 'things more in her stride':

> I have learnt so much about myself, my weaknesses and my capabilities, including my growing confidence. I remember when we were asked to carry out IT inductions near the beginning of the internship, and how much this filled me with dread. If I was asked to do something similar now, I would take it more in my stride and doubt my capabilities a lot less. (Chloe)

Melody described feeling 'alien' at first, not knowing much, and being surprised by the sense of belonging she had achieved through the internship. She summed up her personal growth in this way:

> The 1:1 meetings for help with anything, and the availability of a staff member so I am able to talk if I have any issues. This really helps for me to develop as a person, not just an employee. (Melody)

For Tracey, there were feelings of elation at a tangible outcome from her research:

> The most engaging moment of the internship was when a colleague and I went and administered questionnaires for the first time… the feeling of elation was something I can't describe, and it seems silly, something as easy as going into a class and dishing out a load of questionnaires, but it felt nice to achieve something, and have a physical result. (Tracey)

The interns were excited by their capacity to make a difference to the university's curriculum, courses and pedagogy. Tasks which might impact on the student learning experience increased their sense of agency and ownership, as indicated in this reflection:

> Working on TESTA with current students and knowing that our work will create positive changes for the course or course team due to our insight as recent graduates and fresh approach to the TESTA framework. The analysis and following application of the case study ultimately feels like a piece of very real-world work that will make a difference in the

university. (Dan)

The interns identified being part of a community of practice as one of the most significant factors in *becoming* professional. This occurred particularly in work on the curriculum framework as old and new hands collaborated in fieldwork and data analysis:

> I have found that the curriculum days are really engaging this is because it allows us to all work together and also gives us a chance to work individually and feedback to one another. It is also good working so close with management and having their help and input throughout the process. It has been something that we have all really wanted to get involved in. (Carol)

> I suppose the experience to be part of the curriculum café ethnography was a completely different approach to any that I have used, and I was surprised how much I enjoyed and learnt from the experience. (Tracey)

One intern sums up how partnership aided his transition to becoming a professional:

> In the latter half of the internship there have been more projects that involve interns and staff working together which has certainly aided the transition from student to professional. (Dan)

A salient factor in our context was that interns were flipping from being students to professionals in the same institution. They were encountering the university from a different vantage point, sometimes in a positive way, for instance when they contributed to a lecturer recruitment panel:

> I felt very engaged when helping with the interviews for a lecturer position, sitting in the presentations and writing notes for each interviewee. It was good to see the process from the other side of the table and be part of this. (Chloe)

At other times, the transition from student to staff member brought about more cynical realisations about the neoliberal nature of the university, as in this instance, when one

intern reflected on a generic briefing by a senior manager:

> Having just graduated I would have thought that the teaching and learning for the students would have been the most important thing for the university, but now I'm seeing a whole corporate side to university that I really don't like. I understand that universities have to generate money, but…it's the fact that the talks spent so long dedicated to talking about finance, but seemed to skim over the importance of education that really surprised me. (Jesse)

Walking on egg-shells: the challenges of team-working

Team-working is cited as a key graduate skill among employers (Tymon, 2013, p.844). The ten interns were managed by seven line managers, with task allocation mainly delegated by the three authors. It was difficult to distribute and manage workloads to maximise the interns' engagement and range of experience, while also being responsive to the different speeds at which each person worked. After six weeks, the interns moved from a silent shared office for PhD students, to a noisy open plan learning technology office. Midway through the internship, the learning technologists moved into the library, several buildings away, leaving the interns on their own. The office context, task and line management arrangements account for some of the challenges with team-working. However, intern reflections indicate other contributing factors to struggles with teamwork: ironically, one of the main causes of team breakdown was the desire to do the right thing and to deliver impressive outcomes. The desire to impress seemed linked to an individualistic mind-set spawned by their shared undergraduate history as competitors. The interns carried this competitive spirit into the workplace. Uneven workloads and the ambiguity of tasks played havoc with outcomes and the interns began to blame one another for non-delivery.

Yet team-working on the internship started well, as evidenced in early reflections:

> Working with a group of interns and not just by myself has helped greatly because everyone then understands each other and what we are going through – it is like our own personal support system, which I think is a great thing to have. (Jamie)

Troubles started when interns started to compare workloads. From our perspective, as those distributing tasks to ten interns, we intuitively believed that each work package was as 'long as a piece of string' and we invited interns to let us know when they were at a loose end. Not all did. As experienced academic developers, we made assumptions that single projects would expand to fill the time. We were wrong.

> The times I have felt most distanced have been the periods of low workload. As much as I would always try to create work for myself, it would be demotivating to see other members of the team with piles of work to do, and still be asked to do more tasks by management. (Tracey)

The combination of needing to impress, uneven distribution of workloads, and uncertainties about their roles ("Am I doing this right?") resulted in tensions within the intern team. In spite of having regular CIQ data filtering through to us, we tended to focus quite reactively on team dynamics. With the benefit of hindsight, we have begun to piece together the story of what happened in a way which foregrounds role ambivalence, uncertainty, the need to impress, over-sensitivity to criticism, and uneven workloads as contributing to the breakdown of team relations. However, the interns' inability to articulate the problems to us in meetings and one-to-one conversations contributed to a spiral of declining relations between them. Intern reflections illustrate some of the acute problems which developed:

> I guess this comes down to gritting your teeth, and getting on with it, and learning to think about the big picture, and that these situations soon will not matter. (Tracey)

> Some people seem to take everything as an attack or they just take it too personally. Something so minor can cause a huge issue which is unnecessary and unfortunate. It worries

> me because you really have to think a lot about what you say, which is like having an extreme filter all the time...in some situations it feels like we are treading on eggshells. (Carol)

Team-working became frayed in times of stress, as when the interns fell out over creating a joint presentation for a celebration event:

> Instead of being a relatively pleasant task, it became a drama that needed to be solved by managers who have more important things to do. I am confused because we are working in a team and these small issues could be easily solved. (Rosa)

Several interns commented on how remarkable any team-working at all was, given the differences within the group:

> Working together and how well the majority of the time it has worked. It has really helped us all I think, also the situations that haven't gone well I think we have all learnt from. It has really surprised me how well we have been working together considering everyone is very different and all have very different opinions. (Carol)

Others were more tentative about the capacity of individuals to work together as a team:

> The intern team seem to be bonding better than ever this month (for the most part). I have been surprised however (which I suppose could feed into the next question) with how during the course of the internship, some have made really good progress with resilience and professionalism, but others seem to have stayed at the same level of professionalism as nearer the beginning. (Chloe)

Even with these difficulties, most interns identified the need to grow more resilient in the workplace as the main lesson they drew from the internship. They were less naïvely

optimistic than at the beginning, and more determined to achieve task completion with colleagues with whom they did not necessarily enjoy working.

Conclusion

Ten graduate interns. Six months. Three leaders. One modern British university. What did we learn about deploying graduate interns as academic developers that we did not know before? The first lesson was that building the professional and academic development capacities of recent graduates is not to be undertaken lightly: it is extremely complex and time-consuming work. Senior managers felt they were gifting us with ten extra pairs of hands; we experienced the intense demands of mentoring ten additional new staff members with no previous experience of academic development or real-world research, in addition to our day jobs. That said, our perspectives were sharpened by the interns' recent student experience; their perspectives enlarged by becoming insiders. We know that the interns brought energy and student-facing insights to major institutional projects, particularly the curriculum framework. Their contribution will outlive their six month tenure.

Second, a particular challenges for interns in becoming professional was the contingency of academic developer roles: situated, chameleon-like and ambivalent. These challenges were accentuated by their position as insider-outsiders. On becoming insiders, the interns were surprised at the mixture of perspectives lecturers held of students, and the complex negotiations about academic practice we engaged in with our colleagues. They were relieved to hear how much lecturers cared about students' learning, as much as they were disheartened to hear utterances implying students were to blame. This provoked a difficult interplay between their former student identities, and their new staff identities. As academic developers, we played the roles of researchers, fellow academics, messengers of senior managers, negotiators, critics, and experts – at home everywhere and nowhere. Towards the

end of the internship, we were much more inclined to discuss the tacit rules of the game, why we had said and done what we had, and our doubts and dilemmas, debriefing with the interns about these negotiations.

We became increasingly aware of the many tacit values we have as academic developers, and the procedural aspects of our roles which we did not always articulate clearly. We have a language and 'how to' knowledge which take time to share, and experience to develop. The graduate interns entered into the spirit of our work, but it was difficult for them to acquire the complex range of skills in academic development in such a short time-frame. Their intense growth trajectory was compounded by being and becoming new professionals. In the end, we were less sure whether it was the nature of academic development itself or the process of becoming a professional which proved most challenging. It may have been neither of these. Personal dynamics, generational factors, and expectations may also have played a part. The insider-outsider dynamic of students who were now staff at the same institution may have played a part. As one intern reflected:

> "You learn a lot when working with horses. Most of it isn't about horses." And I think that's true for this job, I've learnt a lot from working here, and most of the things are lessons I didn't expect to learn, but I'm glad I did. (Tracey)

As we have reflected on the outcomes of the internship: successes to celebrate on the outside, and private failures, we have realised that we need to awaken our academic colleagues more to theories of student intellectual development, particularly Baxter Magolda's self-authorship and Perry's developmental schema. Here we had ten successful graduates who were thrown by the ambivalence and open-ended nature of projects with no easy answers. The internship has been quite revealing to us in that our graduates are

technically competent, knowledgeable about their disciplines, and really keen to knuckle down to meaningful 'real-world' work. It is equally clear that they are unused to solving authentic problems and reach out for the rule book in situations demanding complex thinking. As graduates, they were seemingly flummoxed by messy, open-ended and ill-defined problems. These kinds of problems will dog them through life, and it is these kinds of problems which the curriculum needs to pose if graduates are to succeed at the messy and contingent business of *becoming* professional.

The insights we draw from the experience are threefold. First, don't bite off more than you can chew; second, never underestimate the complex nature of academic development and the difficulty of translating its warp and weft to outsiders coming in, particularly insider-outsiders who have recently crossed the line from being students to becoming novice academic developers; third, investigate with academic colleagues whether the life of the mind is being dampened by tightly defined, competitive tasks which reward students for coming up with a clear-cut answer, and, if so, help colleagues to devise curricula which frame some insoluble and messy problems for their students.

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