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This presentation will draw on data from our research into university lecturers' workplace writing in exploring issues of academic practice and academic identity. The project has been examining routine, everyday writing, as opposed to the more prestigious or scholarly writing which is usually associated with academic work. We have interviewed academics working in different contexts and at different levels of seniority, and discussed with them their experience of creating and working with a range of everyday workplace documents, which have been selected by the participants themselves. We frame these activities as *literacy practices*, claiming that such a perspective offers a valuable conceptual lens for exploring aspects of academic practice and academic identity in today's higher education.

We suggest that our analysis of these textual forms of contemporary academic practice point compellingly to the need to move on from the dominant conception of practice in terms of research, teaching and administration, to something more textual, situated, holistic and grounded in the totality of lecturers' lived experience of professional practice and academic identity.

Introduction and background

In this paper, and in the linked conference presentation, we discuss the most recent phase of our investigation into university lecturers' everyday professional writing practices. Motivated by an interest in the relationship between routine writing and aspects of professional practice and identity, we have interviewed about thirty academics in three different universities, and discussed with them the function and significance of (in each case) three documents, selected by the participants themselves, which they had recently written, or contributed to.[1]

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[1] An indicative list of the kinds of documents our interview participants selected for discussion is provided in Appendix 1.

In an earlier paper (Lea & Stierer 2009), we rehearsed the conceptual and methodological underpinnings for our investigation. Rather than take up limited space in this paper repeating those discussions, we refer the reader to that earlier paper. In common with other research and scholarship in the area of 'Academic Literacies' (Lea & Stierer 2000), we see writing as central to the 'discoursal construction of identity' – that is, the ways in which writing functions reflexively both to constitute and to express identities (Ivanič 1998; 2006). This body of work has been crucially concerned with the relationship between writing and *student* academic identities; we are extending its reach here to examine this inter-relationship with respect to the identities of professional academics. In applying this lens to the particular context of university academics we seek to offer new insights into the nature of contemporary academic practice and academic identity, by rendering the familiar strange, by making the invisible visible, or (to use Bourdieu's (1988) phrase) by 'exoticising the domestic'. We know very little about the kinds of writing that HE lecturers do in their everyday professional work, or how the social practices and the social relations around these texts constitute professional practice. Without understanding the processes through which academic practice is reified in its associated documents we will only ever have a partial understanding of professional practice in the university as workplace.

In our earlier paper, based on a small number of case studies from our dataset of interviews, we observed that "considerable 'identity work' is involved in producing and working with everyday documents – documents that have both a concrete significance and a symbolic significance in relation to participants' conceptions of their professional role and sense of self". We noted further that "everyday writing functioned both to express crucial aspects of academic identity and at the same time to develop and extend academic identity". Our aim in this paper is to develop these ideas in more depth, by interrogating our data more extensively, and by locating our emerging analysis more securely in the literature on academic identities.

Changing conceptions of academic identities

Our observation is that much research and scholarship on academic identities in recent years has been informed and underpinned by four key assumptions:
1. *Research* is the trademark activity of the university academic, and the principal derivation of role definition, identity formation and intellectual fulfilment. Other activities – such as teaching, but also a wide range of other activities – are at best only acknowledged in passing (Archer 2007).
2. Academics' sense of membership of, and allegiance to, their *discipline and disciplinary communities* – by which is meant strong, stable and separate epistemological and methodological assemblages – is a defining feature of their identities (Becher & Trowler 2001 , Henkel 2000).

3. The political, economic and institutional circumstances in which academics work have changed dramatically in recent years, but the essence of academic identity has largely remained fixed, resulting in acute tensions and dislocations. In particular, the rapid growth of neo-liberal managerialism in the global higher education sector has exerted intense pressures on academics – to be accountable for their work in new ways, for example, to take on new roles, and to engage with marketised institutional practices (Malcolm and Zukas 2009).
4. As a result of these changing circumstances, academics have lost crucial aspects of the autonomy and collegiality upon which their identities have historically been secured. This sense of loss has led in turn to a form of collective nostalgia for a so-called 'golden age', or what Bennett (2001) calls 'narratives of decline' (Ruth 2008).

We are aware that the above may represent something of a caricature, but we have been struck by how consistently these assumptions appear to run through much of the prevailing literature on academic identities. However, in analysing the ways our interview participants have accounted for their everyday workplace writing practices we have been struck by the often glaring disjunctions between the conceptions of identity emerging from our analysis and some of the assumptions about academic identity articulated in the literature. We invited interviewees to discuss with us aspects of everyday academic practice focusing on self-selected workplace documents, rather than their ideas and views about academic identity *per se.* In particular, we asked them questions about:

- Their reasons for selecting the documents for the interview
- Their reasons and interests in writing the documents in relation to their various professional roles
- Guidance and/or training in the writing of the document or the type of document
- The involvement of others in producing the document
- The perceived audience(s) for the document and the way that perception shaped the writing
- The subsequent 'life' of the document after production: its function in the workplace and its impact on the writer

Emerging from our analysis of these accounts of everyday textual practice are, for example: very different orientations to research and discipline; a multiplicity of roles, activities and functions, rendering the conventional formulation of 'research, teaching and administration' fairly meaningless; relatively little sense of ideological compromise, even when discussing their relationship with apparently 'audit culture' type documents; and virtually no suggestion of a longing for better times, even from senior and veteran academics. We elaborate on these emerging findings later in the paper and in our conference presentation.

In trying to locate our findings within the literature on academic identities, we have therefore been drawn to some of the postmodern analyses, which are informed by conceptions of identity as more pluralistic, context-specific and fluid (eg Castells 1997), and which effectively challenge the assumptions summarised above. Taylor (2008:38) exemplifies this perspective:

> Universities have been characterised as sites of 'supercomplexity' (Barnett 2000). If this is the case, then academics are well positioned to learn to live with complexity. Rather than some unitary notion of identity, this acknowledgement and engagement invites a postmodernist notion of identity… [P]ostmodern notions of identity allow for a range of subject positions, each with their own traits, beliefs and allegiances, and each context-sensitive. Rather than identity as a claim that de-contextualises and unites the academic workforce (against the forces of corporatism and managerialism), it might be more productive to see academic identities as context-specific assemblages that draw on a shared but open repertoire of traits, beliefs and allegiances – a creative commons for identity assemblage. This commons might include traits such as rigour, scepticism, inquisitiveness, integrity, creativity, imagination and discipline, associated with more traditional notions of academic work, with additions such as networking, laterality, hybridity, flexibility, multi-tasking and media capability more representative of 'supercomplexity'.

In a similar vein, Clegg's (2008:329) analysis of academic identities 'under threat' is informed by a view of identity as

> …not a fixed property, but as part of the lived complexity of a person's project and their ways of being in those sites which are constituted as being part of the academic.

These kinds of conceptualisations offer us a useful way of framing our analysis. They refocus discussion of academic identities on processes of meaning-making in conditions of 'supercomplexity', and provide a more nuanced basis on which to interpret our participants' accounts. What is missing from these analyses, we suggest, is a grounding in everyday academic practice: even in those cases where the analysis is informed by and illustrated with data, the data are based on interviews focusing directly on aspects of identity rather than on practice. We therefore see our research as contributing to these postmodern reconceptualisations of academic identities through analysis of academics' accounts of the texts and practices comprising their everyday professional activities. We have organised our analysis around three main themes which are discussed below and will form the basis of our presentation and discussions around data.

Reconstructing academic identities in a shifting academic workplace
We noted above that our participants rarely communicated any sense of compromise as an academic, or any longing for a previous, less regulated, era when talking about their own working practices. The distinction made by

Castells (1998) between roles and identities may be one way of understanding this disjunction between the 'narratives of decline', as portrayed in some of the literature, and the more positive relationship to their own day-to-day practices as articulated by our participants. For Castells, roles are defined by norms which are structured by particular societal institutions and organizations, in this instance the university in question. In contrast, identities are internalizations and therefore are much stronger sources of meaning for people:

> Identities are sources of meaning for the actors themselves. Although….
> Identities can also be originated from dominant institutions, they become
> identities only when and if social actors internalize them, and construct their
> meaning around this internalization… Some identities can coincide with
> social roles…Yet, identities are stronger sources of meaning than roles
> because of the process of self-construction and individuation that they
> involve. In simple terms, identities organize the meaning while roles organize
> the functions. I see meaning as the symbolic identification by a social actor of
> the purpose of her/his action. (Castells 1996 pp 7-8)

Although our participants did sometimes name specific roles they had in an organization – for example, as pedagogic lead in a nursing programme – their explanations around the documents tended to foreground their own involvement in text production and the particular meanings inscribed in these documents for them personally. In paying particular attention to textual practice we have been able to examine some of the ways in which identity work is being enacted in day-to-day professional practice. Although these practices may in part be associated with particular institutional roles, we would argue from a literacies perspective that it is the meanings ascribed to the practices, and which are evident in our data, that are more significant in terms of understanding issues of academic identity. Even something as apparently straightforward as choosing examples of documents of everyday writing, as the focus of discussion for the interview, illustrates a form of identity formation work. On one hand the documents could be viewed simply as material instantiations of an individual academic's role within their own institution, and/or a specific relationship with an external body. However, our participants largely did not offer up examples of documents primarily in terms of role or things that simply had to get done as part of an institutional (internal or external) imperative. Although, as a consequence of the guidance we gave them on the project, they rarely spent any significant time in choosing documents, their choice provided evidence of a strong personal engagement in the practices enacted around the document. The reasons they gave for their choices also offered evidence for new articulations of academic identities in the face of ongoing institutional change.

We intend to explore this in more depth in the conference presentation through consideration of a case study of one participant who talked around a briefing paper he and his colleagues had been asked to prepare for the vice-

chancellor of their university. He described how the VC was particularly keen to showcase particular 'academic stars' in order to procure external funding for what he saw as a potentially prestigious unit within which the participant worked. However our participant explained how he and his colleagues resisted the VC's initial approach to the briefing paper, preferring to adopt a more collegial team-based approach, which they felt represented the academic stance that they were taking in completing this document.

We will also draw on examples from the data to illustrate how individual academics enact power and authority around a range of textual practices, even when these practices are far removed from the more conventional domains of research and teaching, where one might expect to find the main locus of academic control in institutional and disciplinary terms. This supports Delanty's (2007) contention that academics are constantly repositioning themselves and being repositioned and that such identities are intertwined with the "symbolic language and form of the university" (p.127). In short, we are arguing that academic identities are not only shaped by institutions but also continue to shape the institutions in which academics work despite what at first sight appears to be the apparent dominance of top-down managerialism .

Considering new articulations of disciplinarity
Looking through the lens of textual practices has required us to pay attention to new written genres in the workplace, new audiences in and outside the university, and new institutional and external contexts for document-production and circulation in terms of workplace practices. Most significantly, the data provide evidence of how individual academics are finding ways of claiming and maintaining authority in these ever changing contexts. From our analysis of the data we suggest that traditional ideas of disciplinarity are being rearticulated in textual spaces that may seem far removed from more conventional disciplinary written genres such as monographs and journal articles. In this respect our data indicates evidence of academics as competent translators of their own academic specialisms for a variety of audiences, both new and more established.

In the session we will examine what we mean by a rearticulation of disciplinarity in new textual spaces, using some examples from our data. Specifically, we will elaborate this through the case of one of our participants, who explained her involvement in the life of one of her documents as it developed from a powerpoint presentation to a policy agenda for a government initiative on climate change. Through discussions around the documents she explores her own involvement as a specialist adviser in providing expert guidance on the sustainable measures that could be taken by small companies offering incentives to their staff to 'go green'.

We will explore how such translation appears to be a hallmark of new practices in new contexts, indicating both a rearticulation of the discipline and realignment of academic identities embodied in textual practices which appear to be constantly in flux. We provide examples of the ways in which academics continue to maintain and carve out powerful and authoritative spaces in the academy as it constantly reconfigures its mission in relation to itself and in response to outside imperatives from governmental and other bodies.

Moving on from the golden age
Our overall aim has been to make visible aspects of everyday academic practice, which generally remain hidden. Our intention in the session is to use data and findings from our own research to move the discussions beyond what we are referring to as 'golden age' narratives, which look back fondly to an era of academic freedom and autonomy and the dominance of personal research as a key aspect of academic identity. Taylor (2007) encapsulates this perspective in his discussions around being an academic in today's higher education and the sense of personal loss felt by many academics. This sense of loss is encapsuled for him in the changing context for identity formation which takes place in an "ongoing, troubled and conflicted domain" (p. 27). Despite the potentially unsettling nature of this domain, he argues that, nevertheless, any one individual is able to hold allegiances to a number of different beliefs, which may indeed be epistemologically inconsistent, but which offer a range of possibilities for "reinforcing a sense of self". Delanty (2007) also challenges what he refers to as the 'nostalgia narrative'. suggesting that academics still have a level of autonomy and freedom which doesn't exist in other professions. Our data supports Delanty's claim with regard to the way in which our participants continued to exercise power in the institution in spite of the top down managerialism that permeates the HE workplace.

Conclusion

Our interest has been primarily in participants' own representations of their practices in specific institutional contexts. The literacies research method has enabled us to explore the context of academics' workplace literacy practice without making prior judgements about these practices or their meanings for the participants involved. In common with others (e.g. Taylor, Clegg, Delanty discussed above) we believe that dwelling too much on a prior 'golden age' only serves to mask the ways in which academics are forging new identities and integrating these with features of more traditional academic identities. We suggest that central to both the new and the more traditional identity formation work is the ability to engage authoritatively with written documents across a range of genres. Indeed, we argue that experience of engaging in a range of academic literacy practices in more conventional research and teaching contexts may implicitly sensitise academics to what we term 'getting things done in writing', and in particular claiming power and

authority within the institution and beyond through their own writing. Being a successful academic today involves becoming adept at engaging in a range of written genres which are often far removed from more traditional academic writing. For example, in conventional research contexts more time might be spent on writing research bids/research council reports/ impact statements than on journal articles or books about the research. Nevertheless many would claim that academic writing is still central to academics' own identity (Carnell *et al* 2008). We conclude that the reconstruction of academic identities through engaging with both established and emerging workplace documents, may well be enabling academics to successfully build new identities within the changing university.

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Appendix 1: Indicative list of the types of documents collected from interviewees

Referee's report on article submitted to journal + guidance to referees

Advice document for HM Revenue & Customs

Powerpoint conference presentation

Letter to the Solicitors Regulation Authority, Manager for Quality and Standards

Article for *The Times Online*

Introduction for a speaker at a meeting of a professional body

Research report to a funding body

Autobiographical blurb

Rejection email from a journal editor to authors of paper

A programme approval report to a professional statutory body

Evidence of quality assurance

Audit trail of assessment of programme approval

Submission of technical evidence to a solicitor to be used in a legal case (expert evidence)

Draft report to a commercial waste management company

Expert technical witness submission in legal case

Expert technical evidence to government body

Strategy and evaluation report

Brochure for households on recycling waste

Letter to a student

Report on observation of a teaching session

Course materials

Internal newsletter to part time teaching staff

Note to departmental colleagues re recently-attended conference

Briefing for head of department on implications of possible re-organisation of School

Text of an address to be given by the Dean of School on the opening of a high-profile facility (written by the interviewee)

External examiner's report

Paper for the vice-chancellor on the implications for the department of a proposed re-organisation

Paper for the vice-chancellor on the benefits to the university of a new R&D centre

A reference to support a colleague's application to medical school

An email concerned with the individual's 'esteem factors' for the Research Assessment Exercise

Child protection report

Text for a course prospectus

Recommendations for credit rating of assessment elements

Completed reviewer's form for journal article refereeing

Slides for a training session

Case summary (medical)

Email re. 'RAE esteem factors'

Internal paper on the use/status of teaching assistants

Completed tutorial record form

Learning outcomes table for use in marking and written feedback

'Electronic submission of coursework': Paper for internal day seminar