UNIVERSITY OF FORWARD THINKING WESTMINSTER

The accidental global professional: A series of conflicts in teaching academic skills in higher education

Paterson, R.

Critical Review

The accidental global professional: A series of conflicts in teaching academic skills in higher education

By **Richard Paterson (r.paterson@westminster.ac.uk)**

University of Westminster

Contextualisation

In recent years the effects of globalisation and internationalisation have created new pressures and demands on higher education institutions. While the existing literature often focuses on the ways institutions themselves react to changes at macro and micro levels, the impact on individuals' professional identity and career development, within those institutions, is somewhat overlooked. Not least of which is the role of lecturers in English for Academic Purposes (EAP), particularly those making the transition from teaching general English in the private sector to teaching academic skills related courses in higher education. This critical review explores the conflicts and tensions encountered by teaching professionals in this context and addresses research questions such as, "How has the perceived marketisation of universities impacted on teaching, learning and pedagogy?"; "How do English as a Foreign Language teachers make the transition to a university environment?"; and "How do the conflicts which arise from teaching academic skills in higher education define and stretch professional identities?". In light of existing literature and policy documentation, and the author's auto-ethnographic reflection, it is argued Ball's (2008, p.52) claim that "'making the individual into an enterprise, a self-maximising productive unit operating in a market of performances" can have consequences relating to both pedagogy and professional development.

Abstract: *This article critically reviews the literature relating to the teaching of academic skills in the context of increasing globalisation, internationalisation and marketisation. By situating the author as a "global professional", this review traces a series of conflicts that have impacted on teaching and professional development. These conflicts are background to a career pathway that has developed in a haphazard and accidental fashion, resulting in a number of different professional identities. By rationalising these conflicts as natural transitions in professional development, it is argued that the forces of global change in education have been pivotal in shaping the author's, pedagogical knowledge, professional identity and research interests.*

Introduction - An accidental journey

"Teacher", "professor", "doctor", "maestro" (Italian for *school teacher*) – during my 22 years of being a teaching professional I have been called all of these by the hundreds, probably thousands of students who have sat before me in class. During these years I have worked in universities and language schools in several countries in North Africa, Europe and South America, and taught different disciplines and skills to countless nationalities of students. The two constants in this journey are that I have always considered myself first and foremost a teacher, and my progression from role to role, has been almost entirely accidental. I started teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) because I saw it as the best way to fulfil my ambition of travelling around the world; I chose Egypt for my teacher training because it was cheaper than London; I moved to Italy because a colleague in Cairo told me about a school in Sicily; I went to Argentina because another colleague from Cairo had recommended it; I moved back to the UK because the collapse of the Argentine economy meant I risked being stranded penniless on the other side of the world; I got a job in a UK university because of a former colleague in Argentina; I moved from teaching English to more subject specific content because I overheard a course leader saying they needed someone to teach a particular module. In this period I have only once gone through a formal process of application and interview, and that was for a job I was already doing – the reason for this was

because of the closure of a department in 2014, which resulted in 14 redundancies and only 2 redeployments. In this article I examine my current role, as lecturer in Academic English and TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) at the University of Westminster, but also discuss a series of conflicts that have arisen in my teaching career. I attempt to explain and rationalise these conflicts while making specific reference to my own professional identity. These conflicts have both defined and stretched my professional boundaries, but also provided many new opportunities for professional development.

The business of education or the education of business people?

The first area of discussion is one that has had a profound impact on the role of universities over the last ten years, the argument that the perceived marketisation of higher education (HE) is changing the way degree courses are valued and delivered, questioning the very role of universities as places of learning. Molesworth et al. (2009) framed the problem as a shift in the way students perceive universities; they are a means to acquiring a degree rather than a place of education and personal development. To buy into this notion students are willing participants in the acceptance of the capitalist culture, and criticism levelled at universities is their willingness to "fix in students an unquestioning acceptance of the primacy of consumer desires" (Molesworth et al., 2009, p.279). In this view a degree is merely seen as a passport to a job with a higher salary, and the payment of tuition fees is a transaction that guarantees consumer satisfaction.

A corollary of this marketisation is the need for universities to promote and sell themselves amid increasing global competition. However, a review of HE marketing strategies had previously argued that the way universities promote themselves drew heavily upon 'conceptualisations and empirical frameworks from service marketing' (Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2006, p.318). The conflict here being that the context in which universities operate is not comparable to other service industries, and in fact what universities offered in the era

before globalisation morally contradicted traditional business values. In order to compete in the world marketplace universities, therefore, have had to rethink their strategies, not only in terms of new ways to attract students, but also regarding curriculum design and pedagogic initiatives. Here there is also a difference in approach depending on the status of the university. Bourn (2011) notes that some universities such as Nottingham favour "a university led approach influenced by market forces" (Bourn, 2011, p.562). In contrast, many universities, including the University of Westminster, have adopted a more student-centred approach, with the marketisation approach positioning the student as a paying customer and the university delivering a quality product (or service) at a fair price. Bourn (2011) argues that the traditional UK universities adopt their position primarily in order to secure a more favourable ranking in the HE league tables, but I also suggest that post-1992 UK universities are perhaps more obsessively concerned with the rankings, although they may be implementing other measures to ensure a slightly higher position, most notably in areas of research which will be addressed later in this article.

Ranking by reputation

An interesting point regarding the HE league tables is how the criteria for high ranking is completely different to how a business would approach this; for businesses, success is reflected in sales figures and customer demand, but HE institutions can theoretically rise up the ranking by recruiting relatively fewer students while maintaining the number of lecturers. This is because one of the factors influencing ranking is student/staff ratio. However, it might not make good business sense for an HE institution to purposely under-recruit as funding from HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) is allocated according to "certain factors for each institution, including the number and type of students, the subjects taught and the amount and quality of research undertaken" (HEFCE, 2016, p.5). Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) point out that exclusivity is rewarded; prestigious universities

ensure their high rankings by reputation based on how difficult it is to enter them. In other service industries this high demand would be regulated by the market forces leading to higher prices for the limited availability of places, but in UK HE the fees are at least partly regulated by government policy. The obsession with rankings seems incompatible with the marketisation strategies favoured by post-1992 institutions.

Bourn (2011) draws upon previous studies, most notably that of Caruana and Spurling (2007) to suggest that pedagogy in HE is being increasingly shaped by global perspectives. This is evident in the strategy of the University of Westminster to ensure that taught courses develop *employability skills* and *desirable graduate attributes*. The embedding of employability skills is a reaction to both top-down and bottom-up processes, feeding a demand from employers and students. A joint report from the Confederation of British Industry and the National Union of Students (CBI/NUS 2011) highlights that students are demanding more in the way of employability skills in HE course (bottom-up), and that the CBI research identified a definite shortfall in the skills needed; 70% of employers did not think that graduates were sufficiently prepared for the workplace (top-down). A quote from the foreword of the report seems to confirm the notion that the marketisation of universities is a reality and influencing institutions' policies:

> The pressure will be on institutions to show how their courses can help students achieve a return on their investment by securing good jobs (CBI/NUS, 2011, p.5).

Graduate attributes: Being different by being the same

At the beginning of all the Academic English courses I teach, at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, I ask the students why they have decided to study at university. The answer is always in line with the CBI/NUS (2011) report – to improve job opportunities. A key point is also that according to the report "most graduate-level jobs can be done by graduates of any discipline" (CBI/NUS, 2011, p.5), suggesting that general employability skills may be

as important as the discipline specific knowledge. At a pedagogic level there is a balance to be struck between ensuring that learning outcomes are achieved at macro and micro levels; ensuring objectives within a single lesson while at the same time satisfying the institutional goals for building the desirable graduate attributes. The University of Westminster graduate attributes are as follows:

Critical and creative thinkers
Literate and effective communicator
Entrepreneurial
Global in outlook and engaged in communities
Social, ethically and environmentally aware

(University of Westminster, 2016)

These attributes emerged from the Learning Futures project; a series of four developments based on staff and student feedback aimed at improving the student experience. The four parts are namely *Curriculum and Assessment, Transforming Learning and Teaching, Westminster Distinctiveness* and *Academic Support*. The connection drawn between these elements is that 'the graduate attributes will support students to become highly employable; globally engaged and socially responsible,' University of Westminster (2016). A quick Google search of 'graduate attributes' generates a list of UK universities with virtually the same objectives in terms of producing critically minded, literate, environmentally friendly global citizens. The notion of 'distinctiveness', while obviously intended to create a kind of unique selling point to differentiate the institution from its immediate competitors, will arguably not achieve its aims if other institutions also have the policy of embedding the same ideas into their programmes.

The distinction between internationalisation and globalisation in regard to their higher education context is worth noting here. Internationalisation can be thought of as the way in which universities have expanded their activities beyond traditional home-based courses of study to increasingly include activities and programmes that consider international perspectives, and aim at developing understanding in areas such as intercultural

communication, languages and global perspectives (Altbach & Knight, 2007). These are largely policies that an institution may choose to develop or implement, the key point being that choices are made in response to changing external factors. Such changing external factors can often be attributed to the forces of globalisation; the 'economic, political, and societal forces pushing 21st century higher education toward greater international involvement,' (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p.290). This can include the rise of the *knowledge society*, where global capital is being invested in education and training to promote economic growth. As a consequence of globalisation, developments in post-1992 UK universities tended to be student orientated (Bourn, et al, 2006) shaping the way in which HE institutions marketed themselves to prospective students as consumers. Fujikane (2003, p.134) traces this move from internationalisation to a global perspectives approach as a progression from late 20th century notions of "education for international understanding, development education, multicultural education, and peace education."

Transitions 1 - English as Foreign Language teacher to English for Academic Purposes lecturer

My current role is Lecturer of Academic English, and module leader for all the Academic English modules at the University of Westminster, although, with transitions and developments in the field of academic support and learning skills, it is a changing role within the context of the university and within the profession itself. The ideology behind EAP is for students to develop their competence in the language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking to enable them to perform more effectively in academic contexts (Alexander, 2010). It is in fact a relatively new area of interest within the university sector, and the emergence of the discipline has been mirrored by my own career path and professional development.

The term EAP was first used in 1974 and was seen as a move away from the traditional English Language Teaching (ELT) field that had dominated the field up to this point. The

need for EAP arose as a result of increasing numbers of overseas students entering the UK higher education system. Departments were set up in universities to address the needs of these students; small English Language Centres established within each individual university. At this stage there was no real way for knowledge in the field to be effectively disseminated between practitioners, with materials (teaching, testing and diagnostic) being developed at the level of the institution. Coursebooks and pedagogical frameworks began to emerge in the 1980s, with the publication of generic EAP and study skills text such as Jordan's *Academic Writing*, Lynch's Study *Listening/Reading/Writing/Speaking* series, and Swales and Feak's *Academic Writing for Graduate Students.* With this dissemination of practice came further professional recognition of the field, notably with the establishing of professional bodies and academic journals, specifically the British Association of Lecturers in EAP (BALEAP), and the Journal of EAP. Just as EAP was a natural evolution from ELT, the progression of teachers from one discipline to the other has largely been due to accidental processes and necessity; evolution through a kind of natural selection; occupying emergent niches in the habitat rather than through foresight.

I suspect that my own path into EAP is similar to many colleagues and peers. In my current department all of the full time Academic English lecturers moved into EAP after spending time teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) overseas. A study by BALEAP (2006) cited in Alexander (2011) sought to investigate the pathway of teachers into EAP, and the results paint a very similar picture to my own experiences and those of my colleagues. The typical EAP teacher had an undergraduate degree and a teaching qualification such as Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) or Certificate in teaching English language to adults (CELTA). More experienced lecturers also tended to have a language related postgraduate degree and DELTA (Diploma in teaching English language to adults). However, while teachers in an EFL context can expect some degree of in-house training, peer observations and appraisals or teacher development, new teachers in an EAP context

generally receive little in the way of explicit training. In some cases only a brief informal induction is offered, with the teachers then expected to work without further professional development. More than half of the respondents to the survey indicated that there were no formal routes for development, with the only option being recourse to EAP coursebooks or academic journal papers relating to EAP.

During my EFL period I was constantly engaged in rounds of peer observation as well as weekly development meetings where teaching skills and ideas were shared. In addition, the schools I worked in had large common areas for teachers to prepare materials and socialise. It was here that a significant amount of informal development could take place as materials and ideas were shared; a dynamic example of Wenger's (1998) community of practice in action, people with "a passion about a topic and a wish to deepen their knowledge and expertise by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger et al., 2002, p.4.). As recognised by Walker (2011) communities of practice are evident in ELT, although largely dependent on the willingness of the institution to develop and support its staff. However, none of the universities where I taught EAP have had a communal area where teachers could interact; full time lecturers had their own offices, while visiting lecturers had spaces shared with other visiting lecturers from across the broad spectrum of teaching. I have experienced this from both points of view, first as a visiting lecturer and now as a full time lecturer with my own office, and in my view neither creates an environment conducive to peer-to-peer engagement. Staff meetings served largely bureaucratic demands such as standardisation or marking, but paid little or no attention to pedagogic concerns of efficacy of teaching methods or how desired student outcomes could be rationalised and met.

Transitions 2 - English for Academic Purposes to Academic Literacies

EAP as a taught subject is typically delivered as a pre-sessional course to fast track new students with below the required language level for academic study, or as support classes

that run alongside degree courses. Language competence does not necessarily equate to academic success, so additional study skills are needed, especially by those students who are not familiar with the academic conventions of UK HE. The study skills approach favoured by EAP has had much criticism levelled at it; Lillis (2003) noted that in terms of EAP based research, the essay was taken as the default text type. Mastering essay writing was seen as the most important feature of ensuring academic success. Becoming a successful learner, however, depends on engagement with a whole range of text types, including assessment outlines, criteria and feedback forms. Negotiating these texts also requires a high level of abstraction, and can potentially cause difficulties for any student not familiar with the text genre.

As universities encourage widening participation (and in the process perhaps jeopardise much coveted ranking points due to lower completion rates or lower degree classifications), home students from non-traditional backgrounds, both academically and socially, are faced with the same learning challenges as the overseas EAP students. From my own experience of teaching undergraduate modules, it is these home students who require the most assistance in terms of both generic study skills and academic acculturation, and EAP modules delivered as study skills deficit modules are not sufficient in this regard. Not least is the fact that students enrolled on in-sessional EAP courses, particularly home students, often feel as if they are serving some kind of sentence and being punished for their lack of academic capital. For these reasons, the modules I am responsible for are moving away from the EAP study skills deficit model towards a situated learning and *Academic literacies* model.

Here, a distinction has to be made between academic literacy, which concerns itself with the generic skills, and Academic Literacies, which Turner (2011, p.19) describes as 'a specific social and cultural practice with established norms and values, as the object of research.'

Coffin and Donahue (2012) emphasised that the texts encountered by students required a complex degree of abstraction to unpack meaning, and Lillis and Scott (2007), went as far as to describe Academic Literacies as a new research paradigm. Proponents of the Academic Literacies approach, notably Lea and Street (1998), Jones et al. (1999), Ivanič (2004), Lillis and Scott (2007), have recognised the need for a move away from the skills deficit school of thought, and a move towards a model of situated learning. This has been emphasised by Dysthe et al. (2006) who advocate students being actively welcomed and incorporated into communities of practices; in recognition of the fact that while from the outside higher education establishments may appear relatively homogenous, they may well in fact constitute a multiplicity of communities, and furthermore students may find themselves as merely outsiders (Lea, 2004).

One of the key concepts in the Academic Literacies framework is the context in which academic skills are both used and understood. Wenger (2000, p.226) has noted that learning is a complex process of participation in 'social learning systems'. Here a connection can be made between what are commonly considered as desirable graduate attributes, and the core skills that underpin them. Tools for the development these skills are ideally embedded in course design, and then tested by coursework, that is to say, the students' academic performance is seen as an accurate indicator of acquisition of desirable graduate skills. Hyland (2006, p.6) raises the issue of 'specificity', or the differences between generic academic skills and their context dependent meaning

The Academic Literacies approach recognises the wider context in which learning, particularly the acquisition of academic skills, takes place. There is a link here regarding the previously mentioned desirable graduate attributes; the development of these, and also the key skills needed to unlock them, should be a major consideration when designing courses and individual modules. In this way the academic performance of students is also seen as a

measure of how successfully the graduate attributes are acquired. Instead of a generic one-size-fits-all module, the new Academic English modules at the University of Westminster, revalidated as Academic Language Skills for Disciplinary Study, adopt an Academic Literacies approach and require students to identify their own specific academic skills requirements within their chosen field of study. This does not come without some element of conflict, as classes are still made up of students from vastly different academic subjects, that is to say, classes consist of students from such widely ranging disciplines as Law, Accounting, Biomedical Science, Fashion and Design and Psychology to name but a few. The next section looks at how this apparent conflict can in fact satisfy the vision of the University of Westminster in terms of its Learning Futures agenda.

Transitions 3 - Becoming interdisciplinary specific

The University of Westminster Learning Futures programme was established to provide strategic oversight and lead the delivery of a new teaching and learning experience for staff and students that will ensure the competitive position of the University looking towards 2020. Within the documentation that sets out the vision for the University's learning and teaching strategy, there are two parts that are pertinent the modules I lead:

> Students can identify and engage with a community of practice within and around the course discipline.
>
> Options and electives will provide additional opportunities for students to develop their knowledge, skills and experiences. In particular, they will provide opportunities for students to further develop their Graduate Attributes
>
> (University of Westminster Learning Futures, 2015)

These implementations, and the adaptation of an Academic Literacies approach, have brought about a fundamental change in the way I see my see role as both a teacher and a professional. When I first started teaching in HE I considered myself to be first and foremost a language teacher, but this role has morphed into one that is unrecognisable; I am now a

facilitator of the "creation of new world citizens with proper knowledge of, skills for, disposition applicable to, the globalised world" (Fujikane, 2003, p.143). While the Academic Literacies approach advocates a more discipline specific focus on the acquisition of academic skills, it also seems more in line with process and connections between knowledge, language and power that recognise multiple viewpoints and advocate critical inquiry (Andreotti and De Souza, 2008). Ideas of receiving, accepting and reproducing knowledge are being replaced with notions of knowledge creation, shifting perspectives, multiple interpretations and interconnected meanings. I have coined the phrase *interdisciplinary specific* to try and encapsulate the complexity of a strategy that tries to incorporate multiple global perspectives within an Academic Literacies pedagogy.

Teacher or researcher?

Since the staff restructuring of 2014, my department, the Westminster Professional Language Centre has embarked on a new strategy of developing and supporting research output. Pre-2014 this was not possible for me as I was employed on a teaching-only contract. The reason for this was the previous department which housed Academic English was largely a commercial unit, with the bulk of the activities concerning EFL courses for external students. Walker (2011), in his survey of ELT professionals, identified research as lowest ranking in order of importance for the 36 questionnaire items, with comments such as "[ELT] teachers are practitioners and are often not interested in research" (Walker, 2011, p.322). Post-2014, Academic English lecturers at Westminster now have parity with the rest of the academic staff, and are expected to contribute to the research output of the university. This is in line with the requirements of the Research Excellence Framework (REF), the latest system for evaluating the quality of research in higher education institutions in the UK.

The REF has come to dominate the way research is measured and valued in HE in the UK, affecting "academic identities, professional lives, and career trajectories" (Brown, 2015, p.14). This has affected the relationship between research and teaching, where research is

key factor in the university ranking systems, and climbing the rankings is a strategic goal. The impact of the research is greater, and worth more ranking points, if it demonstrates influence in the wider community, although it remains unclear whether teaching can play a role in this as the REF does not recognise teaching as an influencing factor. Brown (2015, p.21) sees the conflict here as "'the relationship between teaching and research being undermined." Attitudes to the primacy of research over teaching can depend on an individual's route into HE teaching. Those who come from a mainly teaching background, such as ELT in my case, and accidentally drifted into subject specialism may see research as a new and exciting avenue to explore, the goal of which is to develop pedagogic initiatives that may be beneficial to the local (institution) teaching environment. Typically this can be achieved through action research and would be largely practical in nature. In my department this is the kind of research that is being developed by the language teachers (English and Modern Foreign Languages); in essence the domains of teaching and research are part of the same strategic priorities, echoed by the University documentation which states:

> We will ensure that everyone involved in teaching and supporting learning is appropriately qualified, supported and developed, and that our learning and teaching practices are informed by scholarship and reflection.
>
> (University of Westminster Learning Futures, 2015)

In contrast, academics that have not come from a teaching background may see this strategy as more of a challenge, with the development of their teaching practice being something that hinders the more important matter of publishing research. Universities may acquiesce to this by increasingly employing visiting lecturers to do the day to day teaching.

Learning on the job

For lecturers in EAP there is a strong link between subject knowledge and pedagogical theory; it could be argued that there is really no distinction between the two, except one is

doing (pedagogy), and the other is talking about doing (subject knowledge). Bentall (2015) points out that many academics may not have a strong teaching identity before entering HE, and their perception of good teaching within their discipline will be largely influenced by their own learning experiences. EAP lecturers, however, do not acquire their discipline specific knowledge through traditional classroom based learning. While most academics are highly specialised in their field before entering the HE teaching environment, EAP lecturers have often acquired the specific subject knowledge on the job 'by using an EAP coursebook or by working it out for themselves in their own context' (Alexander, 2010, p.4). While it is also noted that "the field [EAP] still has some way to go in establishing its professional status within institutions" (Alexander, 2010, p.30), one distinct advantage that EAP lecturers hold is that their level of teaching competence and pedagogical knowledge is a major asset to the university sector. This is something that I have taken advantage of, by becoming a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, and through this sharing my teaching experience with fellow academics by conducting professional development workshops and seminars.

Performativity versus productivity

EAP is one of many branches of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and as with areas of specialisation, it comes with its own epistemologies. However, I would suggest that as a practitioner of EAP, the skills and knowledge required to effectively teach in this area have been acquired almost accidentally as a long process of assimilation into a community of practice. For an EAP teacher there are certain expectations of professionalism, but these may be limited to the local contexts in which the teacher operates. Walker (2011) argues that there is no formal recognition of professional behaviours for EFL teachers "particularly with respect to their dual role as educators and service providers in a commercial context" (Walker, 2011, p.309) and this can also be applied to EAP lecturers. Progress in this area has been made with the publication in 2008 of the BALEAP Competency Framework for Teachers of EAP, a template for institutions to use as guide for recruitment and basic training

for new EAP practitioners. However, while this document represents a step forward in standardising practice, it is gives advice on the '*what*' rather than the '*how*', and is designed for new, rather than more experienced professionals.

A current trend in HE is to introduce processes to measure the quality of teaching practices and the individual's own levels of work related performance. While at face value this would appear to be a good idea, such processes may cause conflicts of performativity versus productivity. Schuck et al. (2008, p.540) suggest that very act of "measuring teaching quality could lead to practices that do not enhance teaching quality, even as they promote accountability." Ball (2008) is even more critical as he claims that although measuring performativity, and by extension systems of performance management, may invite the individual to think about how to be more effective, it is more likely to instil feelings of uncertainty or guilt. He argues that performativity works best "'when we come to want for ourselves what is wanted from us" (Ball, 2008, p.52). Increasing levels accountability are being introduced in the HE sector; the aforementioned REF for research related activity, and at a local level the implementation of Professional Performance and Development Reviews (PPDR) at the University of Westminster, with the aim being to '"deliver sustainable improvement for the University" (University of Westminster Intranet, 2015). While I am compliant in my completion and committed to the expectations of my PPDR, (which are largely self-generated), I can draw a connection with the first area of conflict mentioned at the beginning of this article; that of marketisation and universities as places of learning. Performativity regimes are framed in the language of business, and are reliant on the completion of targets, or Key Performance Objectives (KPIs). An example of this kind of language used in staff documentation - *KPIs should be SMART - specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.* Here the individual professional is in essence being marketised, what Ball (2008, p.52) identifies as "'making the individual into an enterprise, a self-maximising productive unit operating in a market of performances."

Building credibility across professional spaces

The positioning of HE staff in terms of their professional identity has generated much debate, notably with the acknowledgment that many HE staff have ill-defined roles, with a "blurring of boundaries between […] functional areas, professional and academic activity" (Whitchurch, 2008, p.378). Practitioners in EAP/Academic skills may find themselves in *perimeter roles* if the classes they teach do not form part of a structured or accredited program. These classes may be in the shape of informal drop-in sessions for students, with little continuity for either teacher or student, possibly resulting in a sense of isolation (for teachers) from mainstream academic staff. While Whitchurch (2008, p.384) observes that such perimeter roles have 'converged in *third space* around broadly based projects such as student transitions' the opportunities to cross boundaries into an academic role may be limited. And as REFable output increasingly becomes a strategic objective, EAP/Academic Skills teachers may find themselves becoming bounded professionals, as was my own situation before the staff restructuring of 2014 that pushed me out of the perimeter and into mainstream academia. Colleagues at similar institutions may not have such opportunities, especially as many universities have shut down EFL departments altogether, and outsourced language teaching provision, including Pre-sessional courses, to companies such as INTO and Kaplan. With the movement from perimeter to academic comes the challenge of building credibility within the institution itself. Whitchurch (2008) identifies five key areas which facilitate this process. Two of which highlight the importance of both *what* you know, and *who* you know:

> Gaining the support of a key individual such as a pro-vice-chancellor; obtaining academic credentials such as a master's or a doctoral degree.
>
> (Whitchurch, 2008, p. 387)

In the University of Westminster the supportive roles played by senior management has been pivotal in elevating EAP from a perimeter activity to a widely recognised and appreciated

activity in the university, with a highly qualified and respected team of teachers. When I started teaching in the UK HE sector in 2003, a master's degree was generally required for teaching EAP, and was enough for me to secure teaching posts at several different institutions (albeit part-time visiting lecturer positions). However, the bar has been raised, and a full time post now usually comes with a PhD (or equivalent knowledge) as a prerequisite.

Conclusion: An accidental arrival

This article has traced my accidental journey from itinerant EFL teacher to professional Academic English lecturer. The conflicts that surround my current role are many, but exploration and rationalisation of each has brought about new opportunities. The internationalisation and globalisation of education has been the most influencing factor, as without international students my current role would certainly not exist. While arguably a construct of business led initiatives, the concepts of desirable graduate attributes and employability skills has given rise to my own research career. The transitions from *EFL to EAP to Academic Literacies* has mirrored my own career development, and the challenges of creating modules that teach discipline specific skills within an inter-disciplinary framework has been the main focus of my professional activities since 2014. In terms of my own professional development, my new role has allowed me to explore my research interests, and reflect on how my own path into HE has been unorthodox in terms of acquiring subject knowledge on the job, accidentally arriving at a point where I consider myself to be a global professional. I am still a teacher, not yet a doctor or a professor. I do not think I will ever be a maestro.

References

Alexander, O., Bell, D., Cardew, S., King, J., Pallant, A., Scott, M., & Ward Goodbody, M. (2008). Competency framework for teachers of English for Academic Purposes, BALEAP.

Alexander, O. (2010). The Leap into TEAP: the role of the BALEAP competency framework in the professional development of new EAP teachers. In *English for Academic Purposes in University Settings: Teacher and Learner Competencies Conference, University, Ankara, Turkey* (pp. 18-19).

Altbach, P. G., and Knight, J. (2007). The internationalization of higher education: Motivations and realities. *Journal of studies in international education*, *11*(3-4), 290-305.

Andreotti, V. and de Souza, L.M.T.M., (2008). *Learning to Read the World: Through Other Eyes*. Derby: Global Education.

Ball, S. J. (2008). Performativity, privatisation, professionals and the state. In Cunningham, B., (ed.), Exploring Professionalism (pp. 50-72). London: Institute of Education Press.

Bentall, C; (2014) Approaches to developing pedagogical skills in the new Higher Education teacher. In: Cunningham, B, (ed.) Professional Life in Modern British Higher Education**.** (pp. 26-44). London: Institute of Education Press.

Bourn, D. (2011). From internationalisation to global perspectives. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *30* (5), 559-571.

Bourne, D., McKenzie, C., & Shiel, C. (2006). *The global university: The role of the curriculum*. London: Development Education Association.

Brown, A. (2015). Being REFable: strategies and tactics in meeting the challenges of the research quality assessment process. In: Cunningham, B., (ed.) Professional Life in Modern British Higher Education**.** (pp. 14-25). London: Institute of Education Press.

Burke P. J. (2008). The implications of widening participation for professionalism. In Cunningham, B., (ed.), Exploring Professionalism (pp. 121-143). London: Institute of Education Press.

CBI/NUS. (2011). *Working towards your future: Making the most of your time in higher education.* [online]. Available from: http://www.agcas.org.uk/agcas_resources/324-Working-Towards-Your-Future-Making-the-most-of-your-time-in-higher-education (Accessed December 20, 2016).

Coffin, C. and Donohue, J.P. (2012). Academic Literacies and systemic functional linguistics: How do they relate? *Journal of English for Academic Purposes.* 11 (1), 64-75.

Dysthe, O., Samara, A., Westrheim, K. (2006). Multivoiced supervision of Master's students: a case study of alternative supervision practices in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education.* 31 (3), 299-318.

Fujikane, H. (2003). Approaches to global education in the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan. In *Comparative Education* (pp. 133-152). Springer Netherlands.

HEFCE (2016). *Guide to funding 2016-17: How HEFCE allocates its funds.* Higher Education Funding Council for England. [Online] Available from: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/Pubs/2016/201607/HEFCE2016_07.pdf (Accessed December 20, 2016).

Hemsley-Brown, J., & Oplatka, I. (2006). Universities in a competitive global marketplace: A systematic review of the literature on higher education marketing. *International Journal of public sector management*, *19* (4), 316-338.

Hyland, K. (2006). *English for academic purposes: An advanced resource book.* Routledge.

Ivanič, R. (2004). Discourses of writing and learning to write. *Language and education*, *18* (3), 220-245.

Jones, C., Turner, J., and Street, B. V. (Eds.). (1999). *Students writing in the university: Cultural and epistemological issues* (Vol. 8). John Benjamins Publishing.

Lea, M. R. (2004). Academic literacies: A pedagogy for course design. *Studies in higher education*, *29* (6), 739-756.

Lea, M.R. and Street, B.V. (1998). Student writing in higher education: An academic literacies approach. *Studies in Higher Education.* 23 (2), 157-172.

Lillis, T. (2003). Student writing as' academic literacies': Drawing on Bakhtin to move from critique to design. *Language and Education.* 17 (3), 192-207.

Lillis, T. and Scott, M. (2007). Defining academic literacies research: Issues of epistemology, ideology and strategy. *Journal of Applied Linguistics.* 4 (1), 5-32.

Molesworth, M., Nixon, E., & Scullion, R. (2009). Having, being and higher education: The marketisation of the university and the transformation of the student into consumer. Teaching in higher Education, 14 (3), 277-287.

Schuck, S., Gordon, S., & Buchanan, J. (2008). What are we missing here? Problematising wisdoms on teaching quality and professionalism in higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *13*(5), 537-547.

Turner, J. (2011). *Language in the academy: Cultural reflexivity and intercultural dynamics.* Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

University of Westminster. (2016). *Graduate Attributes* [online]. Available from: https://www.westminster.ac.uk/study/current-students/your-studies/graduate-attributes-and-potentially (Accessed December 1, 2016).

University of Westminster. (2015). *Learning Futures - Improving the Student Experience.* Unpublished internal document.

Walker, J. (2011). Being professional in English language teaching services: A Delphic panel study. *Quality Assurance in Education*, *19*(4), 307-334.

Wenger, E. (2000). Communities of Practice and Social Learning Systems. *Organization.* 7 (2), 225-246.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning Meaning and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, E., McDermott, R. A., & Snyder, W. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Press.

Whitchurch, C. (2008). Shifting identities and blurring boundaries: The emergence of third space professionals in UK higher education. *Higher Education Quarterly*, *62*(4), 377-396.