The Formation of Professional Identity and the Socialization of Teacher Educators in England: Evidence from the field.

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Introduction

Despite the wealth of commentaries on teacher education, there is little empirical research focused on teacher educators themselves (Ducharme 1993; Ducharme and Ducharme 1996; Acker 1996; Maguire 1994; John 1996; Grundy and Hatton 1995; Reynolds, 1995.). In particular, few studies look at the professional experiences and induction needs of new teacher educators, entering Higher Education (HE) work from schools. This omission means that new teacher educators are an under-researched and poorly understood occupational group.

This paper investigates the challenges faced by beginning teacher educators in establishing their new professional identity as academics in the English university sector. The definition of *professional identity* used here is that this is the point at which the new member feels confident and competent in their job, thus experiencing feelings of comfort and effectiveness in regards to the demands of the position.

This paper makes a contribution, therefore, to understanding the challenges which new teacher educators face in establishing their new professional identity as teachers of teachers and as active researchers, working in the English university sector. In particular, it provides valuable insights into the tensions and conflicts arising in the first three years of working on ITE courses based in the English university sector. The

research has implications for university practices for the induction of teacher educators, as well as for the analysis of the socialization of other occupational groups entering Higher Education to become professional educators. These groups include, for example, those educating nurses, social workers and doctors.

Ducharme (1993) and Lanier and Little (1986) have all commented on the problems of defining who counts as a teacher educator within the university sector. In England teacher educators, working on Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses, can be defined as follows: the vast majority of these professional educators are certified school teachers, typically with a significant career record of successful practice in primary or secondary schools[1], who have joined a university department of education in order to work full-time with student teachers. The expectations of those working in the Higher Education (HE) sector of English education is that they will be effective teachers and facilitators of learning for student teachers at undergraduate and/or postgraduate levels, whilst also furthering the knowledge base of their specialist field.

The main roles of teacher educators, working on English Higher Education (HE) ITE courses, are the education and induction of intending school teachers. As teacher educators, these tutors are then involved in the production and reproduction – or (re)production - of the discourses and practices of schooling. These teacher educators undergo a mid-career transition, leaving their schools to work in universities, and taking on academic roles which differ from the school teaching posts for which they originally trained and in which they have gained expertize. This transition requires teacher educators to transfer their employment status to the tertiary system. This is a transition that entails the learning of new social mores associated with their 'new' profession, adjusting to the different requirements of their new employers.

The data collected for this study allowed the researchers to analyse the challenges faced by 28 teacher educators in the first three years of their work on university-based Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses as they sought to establish their new professional identities. The findings of the study show that, despite having previous successful careers in school teaching, the majority of teachers educators faced

challenges in establishing their new professional identities in two key areas –
developing a pedagogy for HE-based ITE work and becoming research active.
Meeting both of these challenges required significant adaptations to their previous
professional identities as school teachers. This transition required adaptation to their
previous school teaching experience in order to develop their new role as teachers of
teachers, and developing a new sense of themselves as scholars and researchers. The
transition to a new professional identity therefore required the development of a
different body of knowledge, skills and expertise, drawing on but not restricted by
previous knowledge and experience as a school teacher.

Conceptual framework

In examining the formation of professional identity, Southworth (1995) used a
psychodynamic model to distinguish differences between situational self and
substantial self when describing professional role transition. Drawing on the work of
Nias (1989), Southworth concluded that situational selves are developed from
interaction with others whilst the substantial self is a core of self-defining beliefs
relatively impervious to change, many of which are formed through general life
experiences. In adopting this line of reason it is possible to suggest that the point
where a new member of a profession and organization feels comfortable with the
demands of their new professional position is where situational self is aligned with
substantial self.

The twin processes of adjustment to the new role are frequently described through the
use of socialization theory. Observers and researchers usually identify the two aspects
as professional socialization (e.g. Daresh, 1995; Barnett, 2001), where the new
member attempts to describes the process which involves learning what it is to be a
part of that profession, and organizational socialization, defined as the process by
which one learns the knowledge, values, and behaviours required to perform a
specific role within an organization (Schein, 1988). Much of the discourse on
organizational socialization has focused on the issues relating to a single organization
rather than to a system, however, and it needs to be recognized that the expectations
of academic staff within HE institutions in England are generic. Whilst some issues

relating to the joining of a particular organization will undoubtedly be relevant to the experience of teacher educators in this study, the major interest will be with the adaptation processes required in achieving their new occupational identity and will thus focus on their professional socialization.

With professional socialization, prospective teachers usually begin to learn the demands of the job prior to commencement from their own experience of schooling and teaching, as well as through formal courses. This has been described as a process of *anticipatory socialization* (Taylor, 1968: 147; Greenfield, 1985: 100; Eraut, 1994: 31) whereby prospective postholders prepare themselves through gathering social and technical experiences that will qualify them for the role.

Most teacher educators in England have limited experience of their new roles before entering HE. As school teachers who have experienced ITE themselves at the beginning of their careers, they have their own ingrained memories and attitudes to that professional induction experience. They may also have acquired experience of teacher education through the role of being a mentor to ITE students on school experience (teaching practice). Significantly, this experience of mentoring happens within a school setting and is focused on the mentor supporting the student teacher in acquiring the context specific knowledge of how to teach a particular class. Few teacher educators have the opportunity to work on a sustained basis in the HE setting before entering their universities. Their opportunities for anticipatory socialization activities, within the HE setting, are therefore limited.

Particularly helpful in the framing this transition from aspirant to practising professional are the conclusions of Gronn (1993) who, in studies of succession, developed a four stage model that began with *Formation,* passed through *Accession* to *Incumbency* and, finally ends with *Divestiture.* During the formative stage the practitioner is subject to a range of early influences from agencies such as the family, school and other reference groups which shape their personality. During accession to the post the practitioner makes progress to their future position through the creation of knowledge and expertize appropriate to the post. The period of incumbency covers the

total period of the post, from appointment to leaving. The period of divestiture covers the period of leaving for the retiring and the disenchanted or a period of re-invention for the enchanted. This study investigates the period of practice to the point where the new postholder successfully achieves an occupational identity, with which s/he feels both comfortable and effective, and has thus concentrated on issues from the formative, accession and early stages of incumbency. Studies of other occupations in education show that, typically, this process complete within three years of appointment (e.g. Parkay and Hall, 1992; Day and Bakioglu , 1996; Reeves, Moos, and Forrest, 1998; Weindling, 2000).

The transition period for teacher educators

In contrast to other occupations in education requiring a mid-career transition, teacher educators generally do not enjoy a period of anticipatory socialization, characterized by experience of 'role gradations' (Merton, 1968: 239), where an individual moves more or less continuously through a sequence of statuses and associated roles, each of which does not differ greatly from the one which has gone before. The consequence is that teacher educators have to go through a rapid realignment of priorities and expertize in order to be effective in their new role. The absence of role models or prior relevant experience creates an additional pressure during the period of *situational adjustment* (Becker, 1964), the process by which individuals take on the characteristics required by the situation in which they participate.

The few available studies of new teacher educators in various national contexts have identified that the transition between school teaching and work as a teacher educator is often stressful, with many tutors having difficulties in adjusting to the expectations of HE (Acker 1996; Ducharme 1993; Sinkinson 1997; Hatt 1997; Murray 2003; Nicol 1997). Uncertainty about new professional roles (Wilson 1990), the difficulty of adjusting to the pedagogical skills needed to work with adult learners (Kremer-Hayon and Zuzovsky 1995; Department for Education and Science, 1987), and concerns about the adequacy of the professional and academic knowledge bases necessary for HE work are all identified as areas of stress (Kremer-Hayon and Zuzovsky 1995).

In an earlier study teacher educators, with less than three years experience of HE work, were found to have similar professional biographies, values and attributes (Murray 2002). These tutors were defined as *Novices*; they constructed a model of teacher educator professionalism termed *practitioner bond professionalism* in which the experience of school teaching was central. For these tutors professional credibility centred on their identities as ex-school teachers, and they had strong senses of responsibility and commitment to the school sector. Teaching on ITE courses was seen as at the centre of their HE work, with all these tutors undertaking extended teaching roles, and expressing strong commitment to their students' development. These new teacher educators had limited engagement in research during their first years in HE, and had ambivalent or negative attitudes to future research activity.

Ducharme (1993) in common with a number of other analysts (see, for example Lanier and Little 1986; Ducharme & Agne 1989; Hatton 1997) identifies sub-groups of teacher educators who continue to adhere to similar models of teacher educator professionalism and who consequently never adjust to the norms of the university sector. Such analyses have been defined as creating a 'deficit model' for these teacher educators in which such they are seen as at best only *semi-academics* (Murray 2002:77).

Methodology

The sample group for this study was 28 teacher educators working on ITE courses in seven HEIs, including three 'old' universities, three 'new' universities, and one College of Higher Education (CHE)[2]. All the individuals in the sample group were in their first three years of HE-based ITE work, and had taught in primary or secondary schools at some point in their first careers. All were teaching on ITE courses, on full-time contracts.

The study drew on data from two sets of in-depth, semi-structured individual interviews, using questions developed during pilot interviews. Within this semi-structured format, the interviews were as open as possible, allowing the interviewer to pursue any unexpected responses and to reflect each interviewee's experiences and

perceptions of her/his induction needs. Questionnaires were used to collect relevant biographical details prior to the interviews, including details of previous careers in the school sector, subject expertize, and teaching responsibilities in HE.

The data emerging from the interviews were subjected to a content analysis procedure that generated a number of emergent themes through the use of open coding (Strauss, 1987, Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The resulting codes were refined by repeated analysis and then used to define recurring themes and patterns, resulting in the creation of core categories (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This inductive process enabled unexpected elements of the data to be analysed. Emergent categories were used by independent raters to obtain measures of inter-rater reliability. Agreement ranged between 81% and 92%. Disagreements were resolved by discussion.

Research findings

The transition from school teaching into HE was constructed by all the interviewees as a distinct and stressful career change, characterized by high levels of uncertainty and anxiety. Recurring feelings about the early years of HE work were of being 'deskilled', of struggle, and of 'masquerading'. Learning to become a teacher educator was seen overall as a slow, uncertain process, requiring the acquisition of new professional knowledge and understanding. Feelings of disempowerment caused by the size of the HE institutions, lack of knowledge of how the systems worked and perceived lack of influence were common.

Despite having had previous successful careers in school teaching, the majority of teachers educators in this study took between two and three years to establish secure professional identities as teachers of teachers. In terms of forming their new professional identity, this study shows the substantial and the situational selves of these teacher educators undergoing long and sometimes painful processes of coming into alignment over the first three years of HE work. As part of this process of alignment, all these teacher educators struggled to come to terms with the professional demands of their new roles during their first years of HE work. The interviewees perceived the key demands within their new roles to be firstly, the development of

pedagogical knowledge for teaching in HE, and secondly, the generation of research and scholarship.

Amidst the uncertainty of their new roles, many of the interviewees clung to two professional 'life rafts', both of which were related to their previous careers in schooling. Firstly, they stressed their previous identities as *good* school teachers, and celebrated their years of achievement in schools; secondly, they celebrated their experiential knowledge of schooling and constructed this as central to their new professional identity and credibility. This contemporary knowledge of the school context was seen as enabling them to support and empathize with students. David[3], for example, stated:

> I know why I'm here, I'm valued for my up to date knowledge of what's happening in schools, and the students know that I'm newly out of school and they value that…., that I know what it's like out there for them teaching on School Experience.

There was, however, a key area of challenge in reconciling past experiences with the professional demands of the new occupation. Whilst the interviewees could and did celebrate their past professional identities as school teachers, they also faced considerable challenges in adapting to the professional demands of being a teacher educator in HE. This study shows that for these teacher educators there was no straightforward 'transfer' of the pedagogical knowledge and experience acquired in and through school teaching to the HE context. Despite their school teaching experience, many of them felt exposed, vulnerable and very uncertain about their new teaching roles. The experiences of Liese[4] were typical of many of the interviewees on entering HE. She stated:

> [My first year] was a tough time, I felt incredibly anxious, exposed, vulnerable and very uncertain about the teaching. I seemed to arrive one minute and then to just plunge headlong into this intensive teaching timetable, I was in a cycle of rapidly revising or updating my own knowledge and then reproducing it – in inverted commas – for these huge groups of students that I felt I was teaching very badly. To be honest I often didn't know why I was here or whether I even should be – me teaching in a university it didn't seem right at all – and along with that there were strong feelings for me of masquerading and being about to be found out for a shameful impostor. I felt de-skilled – it

was as if all my years of teaching experience had fallen away and I was left feeling inadequate and exposed in this strange new world.

All the interviewees talked about the need to enhance their existing subject knowledge, particularly through the acquisition of a more generalized and scholarly knowledge base. One ITE tutor stated, for example,

> When I was in school I'd have said that I was bang up to date with all the Literacy initiative barrages we got, but when I came here I had so much extra work to do … researching the background to what I was teaching, clarifying my own understanding, making sure I had my story straight.

All the interviewees emphasized how important it was to develop new pedagogical knowledge of how to teach in HE. For interviewees in the first year of induction some concerns were instrumental. For example, tutors were anxious about how to construct and 'deliver' lectures, how to pace seminars, and how to manage discussion-based learning. In the second and third years of HE work interviewees were often more concerned to develop their generic teaching skills to enhance student learning. This study shows that there was no straightforward 'transfer' of the pedagogical knowledge and experience acquired through school teaching to the HE context. As one tutor stated, reflecting on his own feelings of being deskilled on entry to HE:

> It wasn't that I didn't know the day to day subject stuff, obviously I did, but I knew how to teach it to year 7 or 10, not how to teach students about how to teach biology to kids – if that makes sense? – it was that sense of - I don't know - remove that made me anxious, knowing that I had to find ways to develop their knowledge of how and what to teach and for that my own knowledge needed to be 150%.

Another tutor, Sonia, reflected that:

> It was like I had to shift the lens … of the way I look at teaching I mean, I've had to shift from thinking about how I taught in school to how my students are learning to teach from me here in this place, and that's what I really had to learn in my first year, well no first two years here if I'm honest.

For the good school teacher who entered HE with strong experiential knowledge of how and what to teach in school, one of the challenges during induction was to develop the new pedagogical knowledge and understanding which would enable

her/him to (re)produce the practices and principles of school teaching for and with students.

Becoming research active was another induction priority for many of the interviewees, partly because of the probationary requirements set by their institutions[5]. Many of the tutors struggled to reconcile their ITE teaching with the processes of research and scholarship. Lack of engagement with research put some interviewees in positions which they perceived to be precarious within their institutions. Deidre stated, for example:

> You know that research is a priority here, you know it's 'publish or perish' here but it's still so hard to sit down and do the research. I've just started a PhD here but getting time to work at it … well that's a joke with the pace of work at this place.

For John it was a matter of accommodating two very different types of work:

> The teacher training work here is all busy, busy, meet that target, write this document, all that kind of stuff, but to research I need to have a free mind – time and space to think more deeply – and I'm really struggling with that.

Lack of engagement with research put some interviewees in positions which they perceived to be precarious within their institutions. Barbara, working in an established university, stated:

> I've got lots of street credibility with the students and with some staff because of my practical knowledge of schools, but I don't have any kind of research record so to others here I'm just a waste of space, especially when it comes to the RAE (Research Assessment Exercise[6]) and to my probationary review which I'll probably fail .

Previous research has indicated that sustained research involvement is problematic for many initial teacher educators (Sinkinson 1997; Murray 1998, 2002). Acker's (1996) study of Canadian teacher educators suggests that a new generation of teacher educators may now be entering HE with more research-orientated attitudes and skills already established. The findings of this study suggest that this is not happening in the teacher education department of these English HEIs. Rather the business of ITE work may be intensifying, thereby decreasing the chances of tutors becoming active and successful researchers.

An additional factor here is that most of the tutors in this study were recruited primarily for their knowledge and experience of schooling (since 1984 in England this type of recruitment criterion has been known as 'recent and relevant' school experience). Consequently, they often entered HE without sustained experience of research and publication. There they encountered professional and organizational demands which established research as an integral part of their new professional identity. Meeting these demands involved the gradual development of new senses of personal identity as scholars and researchers.

The process of acclimatization to HE caused considerable tensions for all tutors. Feelings of disempowerment caused by the size of the institution, lack of knowledge of how the systems worked and perceived lack of influence were common. Recurring feelings on entry to HE were of being 'deskilled', of finding teaching in HE a struggle, and of 'masquerading in HE'. Learning to become a teacher educator was seen overall as a slow, uncertain process, requiring the acquisition of new knowledge and understanding of both school and HE sectors.

The process of induction was complex, alarming and characterized by the need to come to terms quickly with the demands of their new occupation. Jane, for example, arranged for a colleague to observe her teaching during her first year and found the experience:

> Nerve-wracking but incredibly useful. She (the colleague) had so much experience and could give me her perspectives on the students as a group and as learners, background stuff which I didn't know which helped me to tailor my future teaching to meet their needs more closely. We used the university stuff on peer appraisal and that was very useful in throwing up issues about my teaching skills in teaching large groups.

Andrew described this period of his learning to become a teacher educator as largely experiential:

> How did I learn to do this job? Through doing it, through being out there teaching my students, supervising them in schools every day, by having to make decisions about how to teach and how to handle difficult situations, by

making lots of mistakes, by trial and error. I just got on with the job and learned as I went along.

Margaret, agreed, stating

I learned as I went along but it was a very unstructured learning process. I made a lot of unnecessary mistakes – like the time when I mis-handled a student's dissertation supervision and she complained about that to the head of department, horrible - and sheer lack of time to stop and reflect meant that I often couldn't sort out all the ideas about what I was learning and how and why. I felt that I was learning on my own and would definitely have liked more time to think, let alone to talk with my colleagues and to have support from them in sorting out my emerging ideas.

The interviewees identified the following priorities for their induction into teacher education:

- the need to enhance and generalize their existing knowledge base of schooling;

- as part of this knowledge enhancement, to develop scholarship and published research in the chosen area of expertize;

- the need to acquire the pedagogical knowledge and experience appropriate to being a teacher educator

- the need to acquire pragmatic knowledge of the university setting and how it operated

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm earlier work in identifying the transition between school teaching and HE as stressful for teacher educators. The majority of the tutors in this sample group took between two and three years before establishing secure professional identities as teachers of teachers.

The interviewees in this study have moved from being *first order practitioners* - that is as school teachers - to being *second order practitioners* working as teacher educators (see Murray 2002). Where they once worked in the *first order setting* of the school, they now work in the *second order setting* of the university. For initial

teacher educators their academic 'discipline' is their knowledge of schooling, of the first order context. They enter HE with their experiential knowledge and understanding of school teaching as a major strength. In the English teacher education system this is often the main reason for their recruitment, and it is frequently their main source of professional credibility during their early years in the university sector. Since this knowledge base has been generated in large part through professional practice, it is often tacit rather than explicit. It is inevitably permeated by that practice and by individual ways of understanding the processes of teaching and learning. These ways of understanding in turn are saturated by personal values, beliefs and biographies. As *second order practitioners* teacher educators are involved with their students in the (re)production of both the academic practices and discourses of teacher education and the professional discourses and practices of schooling from within HE settings. Knowledge of the 'discipline' or 'subject' of education and the pedagogical knowledge of how to teach that 'subject' in HE are inseparable for teacher educators, since teaching and learning are the essential focuses of work in both the first order and second order settings. They are engaged in teaching about teaching through the medium of their personal pedagogy. It is this double focus which makes the transition to a teacher educators challenging.

These findings present a challenge to the definition of academic professionalism given by Watson (2000) who outlines a dual model for the knowledge and expertize of academics. The model identifies that expertize consists of firstly, knowledge and expertize in the subject or discipline being taught, and secondly, pedagogical knowledge and expertize in how to teach their subject in the HE setting. For teacher educators this model is over-simplistic, however, because the separation of the two elements of expertize which it implies is artificial. Generating the second part of Watson's model of academic professionalism – the pedagogical knowledge and expertize of how to teach intending teachers in the second order setting of a university – cannot be considered then without analysing the personal ways of experiencing and understanding the learning and teaching processes which new tutors bring into HE. Equipped with their personal and practical knowledge and understanding of teaching in first order settings, new teacher educators require support in 'shifting the lens' of this existing knowledge to meet the demands of the second order context. This shift is

not about the 'transfer' of teaching skills but about analysing previous practices and their implications *within* the new setting in order to begin to build new pedagogical knowledge and understanding.

The demand for university academic staff to be research active had added to the stresses of beginning teacher educators during the transition period, with most interviewees expressing difficulty in focusing on this aspect of their new role. The findings thus reflect other findings in the field which argue that the dual demands of being both an ITE tutor, wrapped in 'the cloak of busy practicality'(Day 1995:365), and an active researcher reinforce the sense of teacher education as the impossible job (Maguire, 1994). All interviewees found this requirement difficult, with some anticipating that they would never being able to address the needs of both school and HE through research-inflected practices, to be in Taylor's (1984) terms 'Janus-faced'. The emergent suggestion is to re-think research induction priorities for new tutors with a further need needs to reframe the long term research agenda in teacher education. This would have implications for the job pattern and induction structures that would support a novice or reluctant researcher, the kind of research is it appropriate and useful for new ITE tutors to conduct and the need to balance research involvement with demands for ITE tutors to have on-going credibility with their student.

Conclusion

This paper has identified that the transition between school teaching and working in HE-based teacher education was a stressful career change for tutors in the sample group. Induction support was particularly needed in developing pedagogy for HE-based ITE and in becoming research active. The study also indicates that for these tutors, formal institutional support for teacher educators continued to be variable and often inadequate. Learning from practice was identified as the main way in which new tutors learned to teach in HE. Institution and departmental structures, and informal modes of support and learning through practice often operated in isolation from one another, with few attempts at articulation. The main induction needs identified in this study were for support with developing a pedagogy for HE work and for support with becoming research active.

Previous research on teacher educator induction in England over a period of forty years has identified that HE induction structures have often been very limited (e.g. Taylor 1969; Department for Education and Science, 1987; Maguire 1994; Sinkinson 1997). Studies have also identified that induction structures, where they exist, need to be more consistent, and tailored to the specific needs of teacher education (Wilson 1990; Sinkinson 1997; Gilpin 2003). This inadequacy of induction procedures may be seen as part of the overall pattern of devaluing pedagogical skills in British HE until the publication of the Dearing Report (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997). This report identified the need for more focus on pedagogy across the whole of the HE sector, including better induction procedures for new staff. Since this date then induction provision for new teacher educators in England should, in theory at least, have improved.

Effective induction support needs to begin then with a process of analysing the knowledge and understanding about teaching in the first order. The aim of this process is to make the personal assumptions, beliefs and practices which have made the individual a successful practitioner in schools explicit and open to analysis. Working from previous practice in this way has two advantages: firstly, it helps to develop the overview knowledge of schooling which is one of the distinctive contributions of teacher educators' work (Furlong 1996); secondly, it explicitly grounds the emerging new pedagogy for HE teaching in previous pedagogical knowledge. Whilst first order practice cannot be simply 'transferred' to the HE context, it can be developed and transmuted in order to meet the very different demands of second order work. Induction support in interpreting and understanding both the HE setting and the nature of ITE work therefore becomes essential. This induction into the second order setting needs to go far beyond the conventional and limited 'acclimatization' sessions which were on offer to some of the participants in this study. It also needs to be tailored to the specific contexts of each education department and its missions.

These ideas imply an individualized induction curriculum rather than the homogeneous, 'one size fits all' models, found in many of the institutions in this study.

Since learning to teach in HE takes place primarily through practice, then ways of framing this learning need to ensure that it has quality and professional rigour and is of benefit both the individual and to the wider teacher education community. Achieving this within the context of modern universities, means findings ways in which institutional structures, informal modes of support from colleagues, and personal learning through practice can be articulated.

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[1] Primary schooling in England for the 5-11 age range is broadly equivalent to the US elementary school system; secondary schooling for the 11-18 age range is broadly equivalent to the high school and junior high school systems.

[2] The 'old' universities are also known as 'established' or 'charter' universities. They were granted university status by charter at some point before 1992. The 'new' universities, also known as 'statute' universities, were previously polytechnics. They were granted university status in 1992. Colleges of Higher Education are diversified HE providers outside the university sector, but often stressing their affiliations to it.

[3] Pseudonyms have been used throughout this article to ensure the anonymity of the participants.

[4] Pseudonyms have been used throughout this article to ensure the anonymity of the participants.

[5] As part of the requirements for passing their two year probationary period, most of the interviewees had to produce two published articles or other evidence of sustained research and scholarship.

[6] The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) is an audit of departmental research achievements conducted at regular intervals in British HE. The last RAE was in 2000/01.