

Responding to shifting landscapes: Educational authority and characters of lectureship

Dr Will Curtis

De Montfort University

Corresponding author: wcurtis@dmu.ac.uk

0116 2078680

Abstract

The paper considers what impact changes in further education structures and cultures have had on lecturers' professional identities. As traditional sources of authority become increasingly open to contestation, it examines various responses. Based on an eighteen-month ethnographic study in a further education college in the south-west of England, it uncovers shared cultural characterisations of the lecturer, evident in the data. The paper contends that these characters help shape students and lecturers understanding of themselves, each other and the learning encounters they participate in. Four 'characters of lectureship' are identified – 'enforcer', 'diplomat', 'insider' and 'senior buddy'. While some characters seek to reassert more traditional forms of authority, others are open to more democratic, dialogic and authentic manifestations.

Keywords: Further education; learning cultures; authority

Introduction

It has been widely claimed that the social structures that enable and constrain identity have become progressively fragmented and unpredictable in recent years. This has led to what Giddens terms the 'reflexive project of the self' (1991): as social practices are constantly examined and transformed, actors increasingly consider their positions and actions. This paper examines the impact of such changes on lecturer identity in further education. Drawing on an ethnographic study in an FE college, it considers the changing nature of authority that has resulted from the social, political, economic and cultural shifts of recent years.

As traditional guardians and conveyers of *legitimate knowledge*, educators are especially vulnerable to a fragmentation of social structures. Both their role and the knowledge they teach are progressively disputed and opened up to competition from a range of alternative sources of knowledge-production, in particular from the journalistic media and online 'web 2.0' social networking. To oversimplify, they go from being *the* authority in a particular field to being one voice in a pluralised and fast-moving 'knowledge marketplace'. Bauman (2001) provides a thought-provoking

account of the university lecturer's response to these challenges. He argues that the academic either 'play(s) the game' (p. 135), by measuring success in business and financial terms, or they 'withdraw' into 'impervious theory', 'esoteric language' and 'social irrelevance' (p. 136). This paper argues that there are alternative manifestations of authority evident in the cultures of further education.

Methodology

The paper draws from data gathered during eighteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in Summerton College: a large further education college in the south-west of England. The name of the college and interview respondents have been changed to maintain anonymity. Frequently described as 'messy' research, ethnography entails utilising a range of methods depending on the directions the fieldwork takes: data was collected through a combination of participant and non-participant observations, analysis of official and college documents, surveys with students, group and individual interviews with students, lecturers and managers – this paper uses interview responses from lecturers to illustrate the various *characters of lectureship* that follow. Fundamental to ethnography, membership of, and participation within, the cultures at the heart of the study were the main source of engagement.

As an insider within the research site, with a history as a lecturer in the college and a part time teaching role during the period of fieldwork, there were particular opportunities and difficulties: from gathering data from 'people-who-know-each-other-and-have-experienced-the-same-experiences' (Pollard, 1985, p.226). Familiarity meant observations were naturalistic and student and lecturer perspectives were easy to elicit and generally candid. The common problems of uncovering taken-for-granted meanings were minimised and detailed and historical knowledge of the setting provided ample context for data collection and analysis. Nevertheless, there are risks associated with this insider position. Personal perspectives and values are more entrenched and existing friendships can mean over-rapport – resulting in distorted accounts, sensationalised stories and partial recollections of shared histories. As such, the process meant being both inside these 'learning cultures' and, as far as possible, 'stepping outside' to view from the position of a (semi)detached observer. It was essential throughout to approach data collection and analysis in a reflexive manner – to be conscious of the ways that previous experiences, as well as personal preferences and values shape the account that follows.

The shifting further education landscape

Changes in the culture of further education since incorporation in 1992 have been well documented: a new business ethos based on consumerist purchaser-provider principles, values and practices associated with a 'more for less' funding mechanism, and the move toward 'managerialism' and 'performativity' – resulting in greater centralisation of power and focus on measurable outcomes. Within such settings, funding formulae and financial viability increasingly dictate curriculum provision, contact time, enrolment patterns and achievement targets.

This 'neo-liberal agenda' has impacted considerably on notions of *professionalism* within the further education setting (Shain and Gleeson, 1999, Gleeson, Davies and Wheeler, 2005). In the educational marketplace, lecturers' professional identity is increasingly undermined by the need for accountability: an ever-present 'audit society' (Power, 1997), and the 'tyranny of transparency' (Strathern, 2000). There has been a proliferation of surveillance systems aimed at monitoring, and making public, lecturer performance. Lecturing work has, to a large extent, been reduced to measurable, comparable and publicly digestible outcomes.

Lecturers clearly have less autonomy than they used to – their role is more managed and constrained, as well as more observed. Their working conditions have dramatically (and publicly) declined since incorporation: they teach more hours with larger classes, under greater pressure. They work for less money, with less security, less chance of promotion, and with lower status than school sixth form teachers – as the extent of industrial action over recent years testifies. As a profession, correspondingly, they feel undervalued, insecure, fragmented, under-represented and disempowered.

The pluralisation of authority

It is within these shifting contexts that the concept of authority is considered.

“Authority” thus presupposes some sort of normative order that has to be promulgated, maintained and perpetuated. (Peters, 1966, p. 238)

Peters identifies with a modernist conception of authority: a symbolic and ritualistic social role. Authority, in this sense, is ascribed to those who protect a given social order – it enables social control in what is seen as a legitimate manner. Peters refers to the teacher who utilises this type of authority as 'in authority' (Peters, 1966, p. 239-261). It imbues the holder with the right to make decisions and to generate rules and knowledge, supported by this consensual 'normative order'.

Conservatives proclaim the dangers of an erosion of this form of authority, linking it to the breakdown of social institutions, like the church and family, and blaming it for various contemporary social problems. As such, the loss of authority is equated with the loss of *moral authority*: the corresponding permissiveness and collapse of social cohesion are viewed as the negative consequences of this. Articulation of its decline is frequently accompanied by calls for tighter controls and stricter sanctions, particularly on 'youth'.

The left make use of a similar meaning of authority, equating it with 'unprincipled authoritarianism' and claiming freedom is only possible by escaping systems based on 'authority' (Giroux, 1989, p. 75). From this perspective, 'authority' is viewed as an aspect of unequal and divisive social relations: a source of oppression and alienation.

Arguably, the form of authority contested above, and identified as 'in authority' by Peters, is no longer tenable within contemporary culture. The 'normative order' of Peters' quote is increasingly open to contestation and taken with it the prescribed status of those designated to protect it.

Peters' contrasting term of the teacher as 'an authority' might provide a more informative starting point to explore lecturers' authority within a further education setting today. In this instance, authority is gained from knowledge, skills and personal qualities. "A person who is genuinely an authority about something invests it with an aura" (Peters, 1966, p. 259).

A lecturer who is 'an authority' is able to permeate students with a sense that their studies are worthwhile, exciting and valuable. Peters recognises the dangers of this form of authority. Drawing from the work of Weber on *charisma*, he claims an authority can become *authoritarian* (ibid, p. 261). The lecturer can use their superior position to impose beliefs on their students and suppress alternative voices.

Unlike the earlier version though, the lecturer as 'an authority' possesses only 'provisional authority' – always open to challenge. A statement is not right simply by virtue of them saying it is: 'an authority' implies there is more than one possible source of authority. Moreover, in contemporary culture, 'an authority' is increasingly open to contestation as the democratisation of knowledge enables a proliferation of *authorities* to coexist. Giroux talks of an 'emancipatory authority' (1989, p. 88) in the development of a, 'dialectical view of the relationship between authority and education' (ibid p. 77). As 'transformative intellectuals' (Giroux, 1988. P. 126-128), teachers (and lecturers) have the task of developing critical, hopeful and engaged youths. Without the constraints of being 'in authority', the FE lecturer as 'an authority' is more able to enter into democratic classroom dialogue over the nature and role of authority (and education), creating the conditions for students to gain both self and social empowerment (Giroux, 1989, p. 102).

Characters of Lectureship

Lecturers respond to the shifting landscapes identified above in highly diverse ways: depending on their motivations, interests, skills, personality, experiences and personal histories, as well as the various positions they occupy within the establishment. The nature and content of their subject area and the relationships with groups or particular students impact considerably on how they interpret and enact their role. It is the contention of this paper that lecturers construct their responses, and their professional identities more generally, with reference to shared constructions of what it means to be a further education lecturer: that cultures within the college give rise to a number of *characters of lectureship* that are identifiable and recognisable. These *characters of lectureship* are similar to what Weber referred to as 'ideal types':

An ideal type is formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent *concrete individual* phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct (Weber, 1949, p. 90)

So, these *characters of lectureship* reflect 'ideal types' of cultural engagement, evident throughout the data: in student responses, during observations, and in

lecturers' reflections on their own pedagogic identities. But they are also more than 'analytical constructs' – they are, to a large extent, the means by which '*lectureerness*' is constructed and understood within these educational settings. Students and lecturers possess a shared comprehension of these characters - and make use of them to define themselves, their fellow inhabitants and the encounters they experience¹. And through their subsequent interpretations and actions, these *characters of lectureship* are (re)defined and maintained.

Enforcer

A predictable and understandable response to greater uncertainty is to seek out former sources of certainty. In the same way as economic, political and cultural globalisation led to an increase in nationalist sentiment, challenges to ascribed authority make many seek to reassert it. Thus, the *enforcer* claims to be 'in authority' by asserting the status of the lecturer as well as the knowledge they possess and transmit.

Where there is an appeal to a special person as a source, originator, interpreter, or enforcer of rules, the term 'authority' is properly used. (Peters, 1966, p. 239)

There is a distance, therefore, between the *enforcer* and the students, which has the impact of stressing lecturer authority *over* students. The *enforcer* gains authority by virtue of their position so, more than any of the other responses, they are bound by the institutional rules and practices: as these define who they are in the setting and, correspondingly, what they think and how they act.

The type of learning experience provided by the *enforcer* might be characterised by Freire's definition of 'banking education' (1996). Freire lists ten characteristics of 'banking education', summarized by the tenth: that the teacher is the *subject* of the learning process while the student is the *object*. The *enforcer*, therefore, possesses the legitimate knowledge, thinks, talks, acts and chooses the content and the classroom (in) activities, while the passive student has knowledge 'deposited' into them (p. 46-48).

Freire criticises this approach to teaching, as it limits the student to the role of 'receiving, filing, and storing' (p. 46). There is no space for authentic communication, which is the prerequisite for education to be liberating according to Freire. In the context of further education cultures, the *enforcer* is a rational and defensible response. Lecturers have been subjected to high levels of instability since 'incorporation', as well as to a sharp decline in their professional status. As control over most aspects of their employment erodes, control over their classroom spaces may feel to them as though it is all that remains. As students become more able and willing to challenge them, the more they may perceive the need to assert their authority.

¹ Lecturers and students were familiar with each of the four 'characters' when they were shown them at the end of the fieldwork

Moreover, since the late 1970s the instrumental role of education has come to dominate, where lecturers are judged by the performances of their students, and where students seek further education predominantly as a means of achieving greater (financial) success in later life. Most significantly, many of the A-level students, with whom lecturers have contact, seek the *enforcer*. This is in part due to their previous education experiences, where the *enforcer* may remain a hegemonic teacher role. But also, many students appear to seek certainty, just as the *enforcer* does. A significant pattern in survey and interview data was that students do not like uncertainty or ambiguity; they like to feel their lecturers are in command of their subject, as well as their classes. So, in many ways, the *enforcer* is providing both what the education and social system more widely demand, as well as what a significant number of students seek.

Nevertheless, the *enforcer* appears relatively unpopular (with both lecturers themselves and with students). As Scott stated:

Scott 'They don't want to be told what to do and they want to feel important. In subjects like these you wouldn't be a good teacher if you were too distant from them (*the students*)'

As such, whilst there was clear evidence of the *enforcer* in observations and student data, lecturers are reluctant to identify themselves with it: it is the most open to resistance and the least likely to be self-identified. There was a tendency among lecturers to claim they were compelled (often explicitly against their educational values) to adopt qualities of this character in response to student misbehaviour or lack of application. The *enforcer* claims to be 'in authority': that they are passing on knowledge that is true and legitimate by virtue of them saying it is. But this is contrary to the expectations of social actors within contemporary cultural spaces. And this is why the *Enforcer character of lectureship* has stigma attached to it: it is frequently perceived to be old-fashioned and undemocratic.

Insider

The insider is predominant in specific subject areas – sociology, politics and related disciplines. There is an explicit value system apparent in this character: the role of education and educators is to politicise students by engaging them critically in social issues and make them aware of societal and global inequalities and injustices. Unlike the *enforcer*, the *insider* wants to spread the knowledge they provide beyond the confines of their subject specifications. In this sense, the response corresponds with Freire's 'liberatory' alternative to 'banking', though it largely fails to live up to his pedagogic ideals.

From the perspective of the *insider*, recent changes in further education are characteristic of a paradigmatic shift in the role of, and experiences in, the further education sector. The combined increase in monitoring, the emphasis on cost-effectiveness and the increased competition between education providers, courses and students, have damaged the cultures of further education. Like the *enforcer*, the insider is nostalgic towards a golden past – though they would point to dramatically different pasts. National and institutional policy impositions have eroded the

professional status, power and autonomy of the FE lecturer. The insider feels unable to teach effectively, or to facilitate engaging learning. As Diana states:

Diana 'I think students pick up from the staff that they are not confident about themselves. I think (*students are*) not getting enough contact, there are large numbers of students that we don't get the chance to reach out to. I think management keep telling us to do so, but realistically it is impossible. We need tutorial time, not 27 hours of teaching time a week. It is only the demanding students and the attractive students who get time individually from staff. It is the rewarding students or the students who need controlling through attention that we tend to spend time with. And I know there are lots and lots of ciphers in the classroom, who are often not retained quite early on, particularly when you have a very large group. It is those students who will decide it is not for them.'

The relationship between the *insider* and their students is one based largely on *collusion*. They 'work with' the students, with the intention of minimising the damaging effects of policies they perceive to be foisted on their classroom settings by people they view as entirely disconnected from the day-to-day educational realities (see Apple, 2009). They see themselves as 'on the side of' students and against policy makers and *managerialist* priorities.

Yet, the *insider*, like the *enforcer*, frequently maintains a tight control over classroom activities. They tend to favour talking from the front of the class. Students, in response to the *insider*, can feel their points of view are not taken seriously, particularly if they are not perceived to be 'politically correct'. Like Mirza's (2000) 'crusader', the *insider* has a tendency to push their views onto the students while simultaneously repressing dissenting voices. They are illustrative of Peters' fears for the teacher as 'an authority': authoritarian, superior and dogmatic. Although they are likely to feel they are on the same side as the students, they act from the position of knowing what is best for them.

Diana 'I think it is atrocious how they have pushed the teaching year to its basics of 30 weeks a year. I don't think that helps students at all. I don't think it helps teachers.'

Insiders occupy a contradictory location. They work for an institution, and within the framework of its value systems. Yet they remain committed to the interests of the students, which they perceive to be undermined by funding and policy shifts. This is a source of anxiety for them, but it also provides them with 'an authority'. *Insiders* develop relationships with students that are explicitly sympathetic to their needs and they, as members of the institution, possess the knowledge and skills to help students succeed despite policy obstacles. For students, the *insider* is 'in the know' and 'on their side'. Like the *senior buddy* (see below) they are likely to spend significant time and effort outside of class time, helping students. Yet, unlike the *senior buddy* the relationships formed in one-to-one meetings are asymmetric.

Diplomat

Like the *insider*, the *diplomat* occupies a contradictory location within the FE setting. But whereas the *insider* embraces this, it is their source of authority after all, the 'diplomat' is a hostage to it – pulled in what they recognise to be irreconcilable directions. The *diplomat* is consumed by fear. They are acutely aware of the precarious position they occupy: that the further education setting is highly unstable and insecure. 'Cultures of fear' (see Furedi, 2002) impinge considerably on the interpretations and actions of the *diplomat*. This character may be more typical in lecturers who teach small, vulnerable courses or occupy lower management positions (as these are most precarious with structures repeatedly 'flattened out'). But the 'cultures of fear' in a 'Category C' college like Summerton are so pervasive that the *diplomat* is not confined to minority subjects. It could be argued convincingly, in fact, that management actively propagates this character, as it makes lecturing staff most malleable and manageable.

Their awareness of their own vulnerability within their contradictory location means they view shifting landscapes as highly threatening to their security. Their attitudes and behaviour are marked by their perception of risk, in the sense that Beck (1992) uses it: that the trust of students is constantly the subject of reflection and negotiation. As a consequence, Christian identifies the way that the AS/A2 split pulled the lecturer in two directions:

Christian 'If they (*the students*) start suspecting that you are trying to push them into a corner because you need them to carry on to an A2, then they won't trust you and when they share that distrust with others then your credibility is completely undermined.'

Christian recognises the need for students to be encouraged to continue a course into year 2: his retention rates will define his 'success' within the prevailing performativity culture. He also recognises the challenge this makes to the authenticity of student-lecturer relationships: that he cannot manipulate them to continue without doing harm to the learning cultures he seeks to maintain.

Whereas the *insider* will explicitly confront the contradiction in these instances, and frequently share their resentment of it with their students, the *diplomat* attempts to manage this type of contradiction without taking a side: that is, to produce respectable retention and achievement data and to maintain a trusting relationship with their students. The *insider* is constrained by surveillance systems, much as the *enforcer* is. They play by the rules, are highly concerned by their Value Added scores, attendance data, student feedback and observation scores. Fear generated by their own insecurity makes such quantitative measures central to their concerns. Yet they also aim to provide engaging learning experiences for their students.

These features make the *diplomat* a reflexive practitioner. Their teaching strategies are more likely to be flexible and geared towards the interests and needs of their students. They are more likely to reflect on their successes and to tackle their limitations. Although this is largely driven by fear and the self-surveillance that

derives from external monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms, it does provide them with 'an authority'. They are, in a very real sense, giving students what they want and need. They strive hard to ensure their students' attainment is high, providing extensive preparation for examinations. They also seek to engage their students in provoking and stimulating sessions, so that they feel enriched by the learning experiences provided for them.

This is what makes them 'an authority': students value the work they put in on their behalf, and management respond to them positively as they make every effort to realise policy impositions effectively. Like the *enforcer*, therefore, their authority derives from their role as an A-level FE lecturer. Yet, whereas the *enforcer* gains this authority by the status it imbues them with and the knowledge they possess, the *diplomat* gains it by providing the learning experiences and outcomes their students seek: theirs is a pedagogic, *caring* authority, rather than a status/subject-derived authority. They will frequently provide additional tailored support for their students. The diplomat is 'an authority' only as long as they are providing the learning experiences the students seek. This adds to their sense of vulnerability and insecurity, which makes them work harder to maintain it. But it also makes their authority more tentative and pragmatic: visible in various ways, depending on the particular needs and wishes of their students.

Senior Buddy

Unlike the three responses outlined above, the *senior buddy* embraces the fluidity, uncertainty and unpredictability of contemporary culture and the further education college within it. They feel liberated from the constraints of defined roles and able to explore alternative classroom relations that they view as more authentic and engaging. They prioritise learning experiences and they feel able to facilitate these more successfully by not adhering to more asymmetric classroom relations: they attempt to enable more friendly, equal and democratic relationships.

Whereas, to varying degrees, the other three responses hold on to their specialist knowledge as a major source of their authority, the *senior buddy* views knowledge as situational and relational. Frequently, it was evident in the data that knowledge production was in the hands of the students, both during lessons and as homework tasks. They contributed to a dialogue, that was usually framed by the lecturer, but that valued their opinions, research and ideas – knowledge and meaning being up-for-grabs and co-constructed. Predictably, the *senior buddy* character was most prevalent, though not exclusively so, in the humanities subject areas, where student analysis and evaluation form a large part of assessment. Frequently student perspectives were seen to possess greater authority than lecturers, as they had more direct experience of particular issues – and lecturers who associated themselves more closely with the *senior buddy* openly acknowledged this. As such, the *senior buddy* does not appeal to the two sources of traditional authority – the prescribed status of the role and the knowledge they impart. In fact, the loss of both is embraced. As Imran states:

Imran 'You are not weighed down with the authority, it hasn't become a burden for you. You are not hiding behind that, it is

much more genuine. Therefore you are relating to the students and it is more sincere and genuine.'

The *senior buddy* depends on positions of *safety* for these democratic values to be fully realised. They are clearly in conflict with many aspects of managerialism, so must feel able to follow a different route. Lecturers may gain this security from teaching on courses with large numbers, from feeling able to offer a variety of courses, or simply from not viewing their lecturing job as a career that must be protected at all costs. From such positions, management concerns cease to be a chief concern. Scott illustrates this alternative perspective:

Scott 'Now I think, well lots of these students are not going to achieve a grade for this, but they are going to gain from this type of learning environment we create. You know, because there is a kind of group thing where they feel part of a shared positive and friendly learning experience.'

So *senior buddies* prioritise student experience over quantitative measures. Both the *diplomat* and the *insider* spend significant additional time outside of 'contact hours' working with students. But this is most evident in the *senior buddy*. Scott, who identified himself most clearly with the *senior buddy*, was frequently observed spending most of his lunch break, as well as time after 4.30, working with students. A central part of the work of a *senior buddy*, these extra-class interactions are explicitly friendly and democratic. This is much like the 'underground learning' identified by James and Diment (2003), where Gwen's 'counselling' of her students and the friendly nature of the student-lecturer relations she propagates, are viewed by her and her students as an essential aspect of student NVQ success. Though, as Scott's quote above indicates, 'success' may not mean the exam success demanded by college management.

Consequently, *senior buddying* is dependent on the co-operation of *junior buddies*, particularly in regulating those students who reject the loose 'authority' of the *senior buddy*. *Senior buddy* authority derives from not asserting their authority. By giving away their prescribed authority, they regain 'relational authority' by their students' positive responses to the learning cultures that result from these democratic encounters. These genuinely relational learning spaces are empowering to all participants, but they are highly tentative. Although many students embrace their 'emancipation', some reject the extra responsibilities they are given. Others use their additional power to disrupt classes. In such instances, the *senior buddy* loses their authority amongst the new *authorities* they have facilitated. Yet there was considerable evidence in Summerton College of more symmetrical and empowering classroom encounters.

At their best, the *senior buddy* is able to cultivate 'an authority' without resulting in the subjugation of student voices. Their professional identities and pedagogies are characterised by humour and warmth, not by dignity and distance (Neill, 1968). They are able to facilitate their students to value and enjoy their study and, more significantly, to relate it more clearly and critically to their everyday lived experiences. They follow pedagogic pathways intent on enabling 'authorities' to develop in their students. In this setting, 'emancipatory authority' is cultivated, where both lecturer

and student are socially and personally empowered by the dialogic generation and articulation of worthwhile and meaningful knowledge. (see table 1 below)

	Educational values	Fluidity of authority	Source of authority	Classroom approach
Enforcer	Traditional – against liberal agenda – distance from students	<i>Denied</i> – reassertion of ascribed authority (of role and subject)	Professional status and expert subject knowledge	Legitimate knowledge passed on to largely passive students
Insider	Values explicitly political – resistance to exploitation	<i>Resisted</i> – ability to teach and learn effectively undermined	From being ‘in the know’ and ‘on the students side’ - <i>collusion</i>	Tight control – teaching from the front of the class
Diplomat	Educational values overwhelmed by anxiety about position	<i>Feared</i> – experience uncertainty as insecurity – risk management	Providing what the customer wants – exam success and enjoyment	Preparation for exams and providing engaging learning experiences
Senior Buddy	Prioritise student experience over management/policy dictates	<i>Embraced</i> – unbound by traditional hierarchies, power relations	Facilitating relational and engaging learning spaces	Communal experience – democratic, equal and friendly

Table 1: *Contrasting characters of lectureship*

Conclusion

Both the ascribed status of the educator and the access to, and nature of, what counts as legitimate knowledge have become increasingly open to contestation over recent years. Many social commentators have argued that this has led to a collapse of authority. But the evidence implies something different: that authority is undergoing a process of fragmentation and pluralisation. In such settings, alternative strategies for negotiating the meaning of authority are created. *Characters of lectureship* offer collective conceptions of what it means to be a lecturer within these fluid spaces. When constructing their professional identities, lecturers draw from these shared cultural ‘resources’ and, in doing so, define themselves in relation to authority. This may mean reasserting traditional sources of ‘in’ and ‘an’ authority, as the *enforcer* and *insider* tend towards. But it might also mean the fostering of more democratic classroom relations, which result in ‘relational’ and ‘emancipatory’ authorities.

This is not to suggest a pluralisation of authority is a categorical positive. Many experience the loss of certainty (particularly of role) in a negative way: Durkheim's concept of 'anomie' is useful here (Durkheim, 1947). A reassertion of conservative approaches to learning and teaching is clearly evident in particular settings. Moreover, these democratic manifestations of authority are far more tentative, context-dependent and contested than previous forms. They occupy a more fluid and plural cultural space, where possession of 'an authority' is continuously and reflexively negotiated as central dimensions of professional identity and student-lecturer interaction.

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