Objective: To investigate the professional identity and culture of lecturers employed within the Further Education sector. Particular regard was paid to the differences between those teaching on FE courses only, those teaching in both HE and FE courses and those teaching in only HE in FE courses.

Design: An eclectic approach was utilised with a survey design including a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Forty lecturers responded to the questionnaire and twenty of them took part in semi-structured interviews. All were employed in Further Education Colleges within the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

Method: A questionnaire was produced with closed questions to collect demographic data and Likert-type scales to measure respondents attitudes towards concepts such as equality with lecturers and teachers in other sectors, professionalism, research activity etc. The semi-structured interviews allowed the exploration of these areas in greater detail and facilitated triangulation with the quantitative data.

Results: A number of points emerged within the analysis that allowed a description of the sample’s professional identity to be made. These points included professionality, affiliation to subject specialism, approaches to HE and FE courses and their preparation for teaching and learning on them. Although those tutors involved in HE shared most of the attitudes expressed by the rest of the sample there was some evidence that those who taught solely on HE courses were moving towards the development of a distinctive professional identity.

Conclusion: The results showed the sample perceived themselves as professional educators rather than subject specialists. They believed that their role was the equal of other sector educators and that they possessed specialised knowledge that is unique to the FE sector. The sample articulated a very strong desire to ensure that the educational experience of their students was of the highest quality.

Introduction

Identity, for the purposes of this research, is a psychological concept that is accessible to an individual through reflection and introspection, it can be envisaged as,

…”a person’s essential, continuous self, the internal, subjective concept of oneself as an individual.

Reber (1985, p 341)

It is an individual and personal experience and perception of one’s self through their phenomenal field. A strong sense of personal identity was essential according to Erikson (1968). It was required to be able to function effectively in modern society. Schwartz (2007) claims that this need is even
greater within the late modern societies of the present globalised world. Identity develops and changes over an individual’s lifetime, it is not constant or fixed but alters in response to different experiences (Beijaard et al, 2004). Thus identity can reflect any and all concerns a person may hold and professional identity is that part of an individual based on their employment role.

Like personal identity it is seen as having a dichotomous structure (see Van Huizen et al, 2005; Sfard and Prusak, 2005; Enyedy et al, 2005). Varghese et al (2005) label its constituents as assigned identity, this is imposed or given by others and claimed identity which is the individual’s own perceptions of themselves. Thus identity is influenced by personal beliefs, the beliefs of others, institutional culture and sub-culture amongst other factors.

For the purposes of this study professional identity will be defined as,

...the interconnections between the meanings that people attach to themselves and the meanings that are attributed by others through social practice

Cheung (2008:p377)

Professional culture can be seen as the values and viewpoints shared by an identifiable and homogeneous group (Friedson, 2001) and will form, inform or influence parts of professional identity. Hoyle and Wallace (2005) claim that members of a professional culture will share ideologies, values and attitudes to working that are specific to that culture. For the purposes of this research educational professional culture is defined (based on Lynch et al, 2004:p 366) as the …skills and abilities to meet the relationship centred expectations to practice… education and training competently.
If professional identity is influenced by an individuals’ professional culture then it is reasonable to assume that different professional identities will be displayed by different groups. The professional identity of the various educational sectors in this country has been seen to differ and this to a large extent can be seen as a function of a sector’s culture.

Nixon et al (1998) have claimed that Higher Education (HE) has a number of cultures due to the diversity of Higher Education Institutes (HEI) and the changing composition of the sector. Trowler (1998) conceptualises these different cultures as being based on three axes or poles, the position of an HEI on these poles will to some extent shape its culture. The first pole reflects to what extent an institution considers that the central aim of HE should be personal or vocational development. The second, should its central content be discipline based or skills based and finally whether the central function of the institute should be research or teaching?

Trowler’s concept could also be used to facilitate a simple description of the differences in professional culture between (HEI) and Further Education Colleges (FEC). Young (2002: p274) claims that despite the blurring of the boundaries between HEIs and FECs

…there remain significant differences between the two types of institution, perhaps particularly from the point of view of the people teaching in the colleges.
With regard to the first axis McFarlane and Garrod (2007) propose that the less prestigious FE sector (Schuller et al, 1999) provides vocational training focusing on the acquisition of work based skills whilst HE provides a focus on higher knowledge and critical thinking. In support of this stance Barnett (1990) claims that the development of a student’s critical abilities is the major purpose of HE. Whilst Ollin (2002) claimed that Further Education (FE) lecturers were seen as vocational specialists rather than professional educators. Perhaps confirming this orientation, the government’s role for FE as part of the Learning and Skills Sector is to provide the training and/or teaching of skills that are economically useful (Finlay et al, 2007). Thus HEIs appear to deal with a learners’ personal development whilst FECs concern themselves with the vocational elements of education and training.

The second axis is concerned with the extent that taught curricula should be based on subject disciplines or the acquisition of skills. Young (2002) suggested that FEC lecturers had a weaker affiliation to their subject discipline than that which was to be found amongst university lecturers. This has been noted in other research and there may be a number of reasons to explain this weaker affiliation. Ofsted (2003) criticised Initial Teacher Education (ITE) within FE for providing generic rather than subject centred support to trainee teachers. In addition Gleeson et al (2005) propose that a paradigm shift has occurred within FE and the traditional approaches to professional socialisation and working patterns are being challenged and replaced by the emergence of a new multi-skilled learning professional. In expanding this theme Spenceley (2006) suggests that this professional is
typified by a commitment to the continual updating of transferable skills more suited to the new diverse environments found within FE. Thus adherence to a single subject discipline within FE would not benefit an individual in an environment where diversity and change is seen as the norm. In contrast Fulton (1996) and Henkel (2000) reported that the subject background of HE lecturers is one of the important components of their professional identity. This could indicate that the professional identity of FE lecturers has a greater skills based focus than the subject discipline approach typical in HE.

With regard to the third axis Young (2002) found that the professional identity of FEC lecturers is more strongly rooted in teaching when compared to staff in HEIs. Fulton (1996) investigated the interests and commitments of university staff and found that only 5% claimed that teaching was their primary interest. Henkel (2000) reported that although academics’ educational roles were important to them research dominated their professional identity. Although Whitchurch (2008) suggests this is not always the case and that some academics undertake a balanced approach to both research and teaching others may focus on one to the exclusion of the other. However Smith and Brown (1995) report that those HE lecturers who saw teaching as their main function were made to …feel unproductive and undervalued… (p13) if they lacked a publishing record. Rowland (2000) suggested that the lower status of teaching amongst HE lecturers was at least partly due to the preference of UK universities to use research measures, as opposed to teaching measures, to access funding. Whilst at an individual level academics view research as their own work and perceive it as a key to promotion (Rowland, 2000).
There is a lot of evidence to suggest that as a distinction between HE and FE staff, involvement in research is a valid and important one. There is no formal requirement or expectation for FE lecturers to undertake research and Robson (2006) claims that this contributes to the status gap between FECs and HEIs. HEQC (1995) suggested that FEC lecturers tend to concentrate on modifying and interpreting existing information whilst HEI staff produce original information from their research activity. They also expressed concerns regarding FEC lecturers not being prepared effectively enough to meet the requirements of ‘…scholarship, subject development and research…’ (p 19) that can be expected from HEI lecturers. QAA (2006) also voiced this concern reporting that HE in FE staff claim that their class contact hours and administrative duties leave little or no time for research and research related activities. Murray (2002) claims that within HE writing for academic publication is a ‘…key professional role…’ (p 229) that many FEC lecturers don’t feel they have the skills to engage with effectively. In contrast and perhaps as a consequence of this, the professional identities of FE lecturers were based firmly in teaching (Harwood & Harwood, 2004).

The evidence, although in places contested, would support the existence of major differences between the culture and identity of the 2 groups of lecturers. FEC lecturers can be characterised as generally concerned with the teaching of vocationally broad based skills whilst HE lecturers have a greater involvement with research and the development of discipline based knowledge.

The advent of franchising, what Woodrow (1993) termed as the quiet revolution, led to FECs becoming responsible for some HE provision. By
2003 FECs were responsible for 11% of higher education in this country (DfES), the advent of the foundation degree has enlarged this responsibility still further. This provision within the FE sector is now so large it is seen as a separate sector and is termed as HE in FE. Little has been published with regard to the differences in professional identities and culture within contemporary FE. It can be claimed that within the sector there now exist 3 divisions or types of lecturer. Those that teach only FE, those that teach both FE and HE and those that teach only HE, it is the intention of this study to investigate the professional identity that underlay’s these roles.

The aims of this study are,

• to compare and contrast the professional identity of staff within FE and HE in FE,

• to ascertain to what extent HE in FE staff may have developed a distinct and professional identity.

Method

The design was survey based and the methods used consisted of semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The chosen epistemological approach was eclectic with both qualitative and quantitative data being gathered. This approach was chosen because professional identity was operationalised as an individual’s perception of their actions, thoughts, feelings and attitudes with regard to their work role and its social significance to others. Such a definition suggested the application of ideographic as well as nomothetic techniques to explore the rich texture of the concept with the
quantitative data providing an opportunity for triangulation. A questionnaire was constructed to gather quantitative data and was distributed to a number of regional FEC’s that offered HE in FE provision. Demographic details were gathered and attitudes and opinions were measured by the use of Likert-type scales. Of the 100 copies distributed 47 were returned although 1 was blank, 2 were damaged and 4 were completed euphemistically and thus not included yielding a sample of 40 respondents. The respondents were divided into 3 groups those who taught wholly in FE (n=20), those who taught in both FE and HE (n=10) and those who taught wholly in HE in FE (n=10).

Of the 40 questionnaire respondents 28 indicated that they would be willing to take part in semi structured interviews to provide the qualitative data. Of the 28 volunteers 20 undertook the interviews and their responses are reported verbatim. The 20 interviewees recruited from the questionnaire respondents comprised of the following 3 categories, FE (n=9), FE and HE (n=6) and HE in FE (n=5).

**Participants**

Forty respondents completed the questionnaire; all of them were employed within FECs and had a minimum of 5 years teaching experience within the sector. All were members of the Institute for Learning (IfL), one of the FE staff was a fellow of the Institute. One of the HE in FE staff was also a fellow of the Higher Education Academy. British Educational Research Association ethical guidelines were followed throughout the research providing informed consent, anonymity and the right to withdraw at any point.
Results and Discussion

1) Qualifications

All of the respondents, regardless of their teaching background, held teaching qualifications and whilst some had not yet attained a Certificate in Education or PGCE all had enrolled on such a course.

Table 1  Teaching qualifications held by teaching background for questionnaire respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching background</th>
<th>Teaching qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FE (n=20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE and FE (n=10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE in FE (n=10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (n=40)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus the view indicated by Ollin (2002) that FE lecturers were seen as vocational specialists rather than as professional educators can now be challenged effectively.

2) Affiliation to Major Qualification

This question asked the respondents if they defined themselves in terms of their major qualification or did they see their role as that of an educator the majority indicated they saw themselves as educators. These responses would also contest the view that FE lecturers are not professional educators.

Table 2  Respondents perceptions of their role by teaching background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching background</th>
<th>Respondents defined themselves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By Major qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FE (n=20)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE and FE (n=10)</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE in FE (n=10)</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As table 2 indicates 36 (90%) of all respondents claimed that they perceived their role as that of educators. This finding supports the views of Fulton (1996) and Henkel (2000) who claimed that FE lecturers had only a weak affiliation with their subject background. However one (2.5%) of the HE and FE respondents, claimed to be a sociologist rather than an educator. Another (2.5%) from HE in FE likewise perceived their role as being a social scientist and 2 FE respondents were not sure of their roles.

The role of the educator appears to be a central and important part of the tutors' perception of their professional identity and may be seen as a part of Gleson et al’s (2005) and Spenceley’s (2006) multi skilled learning professional.

3) Highest Qualification

Respondents were asked to indicate what their highest current qualification or award was.

| Highest qualification held by teaching background for questionnaire respondents |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Teaching background    | Cert Ed or equivalent | Hons Degree or equivalent | Masters Degree or equivalent |
| FE (n=20)             | 11 (55%)           | 9 (45%)           | --              |
| HE and FE (n=10)      | 1 (10%)            | 8 (80%)           | 1(10%)          |
| HE in FE (n=10)       | --                 | 6 (60%)           | 4 (40%)         |
| Total (n=40)          | 12 (30%)           | 23 (58%)          | 5 (12%)         |

That all FE lecturers reported that they held at least a teaching qualification underlines the professionalizing changes within the section at present. The
qualitative data also indicated that many of the staff without a first degree would or had already enrolled on a degree course (see interviewee 14 below). All of the HE in FE staff and 5 of the HE and FE staff who didn’t hold a masters degree were enrolled on a Master’s course and at various stages of completion. As interviewee 3 (HE in FE) who is in the final year of her MA commented,

**Whilst I can teach on the full degree courses I can only actually teach and assess on the foundation degrees until I have attained my Master’s degree. I want to experience the full spectrum of teaching in HE and feel that I owe it to my students to give them the best that I can.**

When asked what she meant by the ‘best I can’ she replied

**I want to give them an authentic experience that is as close as possible to what they would experience at a University**

Some of the FE tutors saw the attainment of awards as an integral part of their professional development, interviewee 14 claiming

**Since I gained my Cert Ed it has given me the confidence to attempt the BA and when I have finished that I will seriously consider an MA because it will improve my confidence and practise even more.**

In contrast interviewee 7 (HE and FE) who has not enrolled for a masters degree explained

**I don’t have the time to undertake any study certainly not for something as big as a master’s degree. Whilst I maybe owe it to my learners I am a working man with a wife and child and would receive no remission whatsoever for doing one from the college, if they want me to do one they will have to give me the time off.**

On further questioning regarding how this situation might affect his position he responded that he was,

… happy to continue teaching on just the FD’s or go back to teaching only FE awards. I am at work to earn money not to self-actualise…

Interviewee 1 from the HE in FE group declared that,
I have worked hard to obtain qualifications above a basic degree and have ensured that many aspects of this professional development has been passed on to my learners.

The quantitative and qualitative responses above indicate that the lecturers’ professional identity, in many cases, includes a commitment to the acquisition of higher qualifications based on the assumption it will help improve their own abilities and their students’ experience. As table 3 illustrates 5 (25%) of the HE in FE and HE and FE sample (n=20) already hold a masters degree, of the remaining 15 all 6 HE in FE staff and 5 of the HE and FE staff are currently undertaking masters degrees. Thus in theory at least, of the 20 in the sample teaching HE 15 (75%) will hold masters degrees in the coming years. Two members of the HE in FE group have already embarked on Ed.D.s and one from the same group is undertaking a Ph.D.. This situation is supportive of what Spenceley (2006) saw as a commitment to the acquisition of skills to operate within the new and diverse environments found within FE. It would appear that those involved in the teaching of HE are taking their professional development seriously and if this situation continues some departments in FECs may hold a qualifications profile that is the equal of some HEIs.

4) Defining Professionalism

Identity was further investigated by asking respondents to indicate on a Likert-type scale to what extent they perceived themselves to be true professionals, table 4 contains the responses to the various categories..

Table 4 Responses to the statement “I see myself as a true professional”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Totally disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Totally agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


The responses indicate almost total agreement with the statement, 38 (95%) of the respondents reported they either agreed or totally agreed with the statement. To emphasise the point more than twice as many respondents chose to totally agree as chose to agree. It would seem that FEC tutors perceive their professional identity as being that of a real professional. The qualitative data highlighted and confirmed this view with most interviewees describing their perceived professional status positively.

Interviewee 20 an FE tutor equated professionalism with ensuring that the students benefited from their educational experience,

*I see myself as a professional because I always place my students at the centre of everything I do. I will not compromise my professionalism and will fight against pressure to meet monetary targets if they compromise my professional and ethical values and students’ right to learn. To me education should be about developing people and quality should not be sacrificed to save money or maximise profits.*

When asked if he thought that his professionalism was based on putting the students’ educational needs first, he replied

*In one word yes, they must come first. If their experience is a poor one they will not be able to maximise their potential and their practise will be the poorer for that. If I can influence them positively through my actions I feel it is my duty as a professional to do so.*

The construction of a high quality student experience was a recurring theme throughout the research and was used as the justification by many as to why

| HE in FE | -- | -- | -- | 4 (40%) | 6 (60%) |
| HE and FE | -- | -- | -- | 2 (20%) | 8 (80%) |
| Both | -- | -- | -- | 6 (30%) | 14 (70%) |
| FE | -- | -- | 2 (10%) | 6 (30%) | 12 (60%) |
| Total | -- | -- | 2 (5%) | 12 (30%) | 26 (65%) |
they could perceive themselves to be true professionals. Interviewee 6 a HE and FE tutor maintained that,

*Teaching is a profession and a vocation – I work hard and maintain a professional approach to ensure that my learners get a ‘good deal’ and support in their studies. I feel privileged that I am trusted to teach the professionals of tomorrow and ensure that I put 100% into my work for their sake.*

The view was also reflected in the HE in FE sector with interviewee 5

*The term professional is much abused but if by it you mean do I ensure that my students get the most from me regarding their educational experience then I would say yes.*

This tutor was asked how he ensured that his students got the most from their educational experience with him,

*I make sure that what I teach is based on up to date theory by this I mean journal articles, when possible, as I want to feel that my teaching is evidence based. My own learning is kept up to date in this way so my students always have access to contemporary ideas and sources.*

Reflecting this view interviewee 4 (HE in FE)) saw her professionalism in terms of the utility of her teaching,

*I believe that I behave in a professional manner in all aspects of my work. Everything that I do is for the student’s benefit to make sure my practise is as useful to them as is possible for me to produce with the resources I possess.*

All three groups within the study perceived themselves as professional and demonstrated a shared culture and identity in their definition of the term. The sample saw professionalism as an obligation on their part to ensure the students received the maximum benefit from their teaching. This underlines and supports the perceived importance of teaching within FE found by Rowland (2000) and Young (2002)
5) Equality with HE Lecturers

The respondents were asked if they felt they were the equal of university lecturers, table 5 provides a summary of their attitudes.

**Table 5** Responses to the statement “I see myself as being the equal of university lecturers”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Totally disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Totally agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HE in FE</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE and FE</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FE</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>8 (20%)</td>
<td>10 (25%)</td>
<td>10 (25%)</td>
<td>10 (25%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was close agreement between the 3 groups’ views with the majority in all groups claiming equality with HE staff. The total responses indicated that 50% of the respondents agreed or totally agreed that they were the equal of lecturers within HEIs compared to 25% disagreeing or totally disagreeing. This left 25% of the respondents unable to either agree or disagree.

The interviewees indicated that they felt that the value of their vocational experience and qualifications were perhaps undervalued when compared to academics’ qualifications, this may help to support the status gap identified by Schuller et al (1999). Interviewee 16 (FE tutor) felt that,

*If our professional qualifications and our experience are to be taken seriously, equal status should be given to all teachers regardless of which sector they operate in.*

When asked to expand on what he meant by professional qualifications and experience he replied

*I was a highly skilled tradesman for nearly 2 decades, I held all of the required vocational awards. My qualifications are what got me the job here, since getting the job I have attained my 730, Certificate in Education*
and BA(hons) if these and my work experience don't put me on a level playing field with university staff then nothing will.

One interviewee (13, FE tutor) felt that the level he taught students at placed him at a disadvantage when compared to university lecturers,

If I taught to degree level I would then see myself as being the equal of university lecturers. I think that the extra knowledge needed for degree level teaching comes from their higher level qualifications

When asked to explain what he felt these higher level qualifications gave to HE lecturers he responded,

My teaching is not academic but concerned purely with professional practice and the demonstration of competencies at much lower levels than that of degrees. I think that because I don’t have their qualifications I wouldn’t be able to do their job effectively and it would take me a long time to catch up with them and gain the necessary qualifications

Academic qualification differences were cited by other interviewees, some felt that HE staff qualifications such as doctorates and masters degrees gave them an edge in status, interviewee 18 (FE tutor) asked,

How can my qualifications compare against a university lecturer? I don’t even have a first degree, just a teaching certificate, these people need Ph.D’s just to be employed by universities and spend years ensuring they stay up to date in their own fields of expertise

The view that a Ph.D. was a minimum qualification for teaching in HE was held by a number of interviewees and was often used as a benchmark of difference between HE and FE.

Research activity was also cited as a major difference between tutors within the two sectors, interviewee 11 (HE and FE) claimed,

Whilst I feel that I am anyone’s equal as a teacher there are differences in my role compared to lecturers at uni. Although I teach HE, my conditions of service reflect those of a Further Education tutor – I do not receive any time for research and have to update in my own time etc.

The tutor was asked if this lack of research opportunity handicapped his practice in any way,
Yes, I am not able to develop the skills I have gained from my masters’ degree so I will always be less able with research compared to uni lecturers. I don’t think this is fair on my learners as they could benefit from me using these skills.

Again there is recourse to the professional identity discussed above with the idea of students benefiting from the tutor being able to enhance his research skills rather than seeing the gain purely in terms of personal development. Some tutors however felt less intimidated by the perceived differences between themselves and HEI lecturers, interviewee 2 (HE in FE) proposed that,

Whilst I exceed a great many that I have encountered[university lecturers] with regard to their interpersonal skills, and ability to communicate to our client group, I recognise that their research culture and production of publications puts me at a disadvantage in some respects.

In pursuit of this point the tutor was asked what these disadvantages were

First I don’t get support for research or writing for publication unless I chase sponsors or do it in my own time, either way the college wont support me. Secondly without a research record I am not likely to be taken seriously so even if I did undertake research and writing it would be difficult to get published.

Interviewee 5 (HE in FE tutor) took a more reconciliatory view and drew comparisons with the requirements of teaching within both sectors, suggesting that,

To teach in FE as a whole requires a lower level of qualification in comparison to the HE sector, there is much less engagement with research in FE than HE although this may change in the future. However I believe that pedagogically, and taking student differences and working conditions into account, both groups of tutors are equivalent in terms of their effectiveness.

Whilst the majority of the sample (20 (50%)) saw themselves and their work as the equal of HE lecturers there were still some perceived differences.
between the two sectors. The expected higher level of HEI lecturers’ qualifications and their ability to undertake research were seen as major differences by some of the FEC lecturers. This supports the view of much of the work discussed in the introduction (see HEQC, 1995; Murray, 2002; QAA, 2006).

6) Equality with School Teachers

The following comparison was with school teachers and the respondents were a little more comfortable in expressing the view that they felt they were their equal when compared to the responses given for equality with HE lecturers.

Table 6 Responses to the statement “I see myself as being the equal of school teachers”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Totally disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Totally agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HE in FE</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE and FE</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FE</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>12 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
<td>10 (25%)</td>
<td>6 (15%)</td>
<td>20 (50%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twenty six respondents (65%) from the total sample reported agreeing or totally agreeing that they were the equal of school teachers with 4 (10%) disagreeing. Eighty percent of the HE and FE tutors and 70% of the FE tutors agreed or totally agreed compared to 40% of the HE in FE group. This may reflect the former groups greater involvement with 14 – 16 year old students discussed below. Of the three groups only the HE in FE group had individual respondents disagreeing (n=4 (40%)) which amounted to 4 (40%) respondents.
A number of the interviewees recognised that they were engaged in teaching students who until very recently would have been seen as schoolchildren rather than college students and used this as a guide for their comparison with the schools sector. Interviewee 12 (FE tutor) made this comparison proposing that,

Having taught in the 14-16 age range and specifically with difficult learners I am of the opinion that FE staff are worthy of equal status with school teachers. After all if we are doing the same job we should be given the same status, especially as some of the students we receive from the schools are seen as problems that they can’t deal with.

A similar point was made by interviewee 17 (FE tutor)

Due to schools becoming academies I believe I would be able to teach vocational subjects as well as Math and English so I do see myself as the equal of school teachers.

Whilst interviewee 19 (FE tutor) was in a position to see the situation from both sides,

I teach 14 – 16 year olds both in school and college however, my groups are much smaller and I adhere to college policies rather than schools however I could argue that I am doing the same job.

When asked if there were differences in teaching this type of student within the 2 sectors she replied,

College groups are much harder at first because the schools send a high number of what might be described as problem students to us. After a while however they settle down and seem to like college and then they can be a joy to teach.

Interviewee 8 (HE and FE) though at present uninvolved with the 14 – 16 year olds highlighted some of the disparities between the college and schools sector despite this shared client group,

Less pay than school teachers and my teaching qualification is not valid in schools, yet I could be asked to teach 14 year old schoolchildren and I think that I would make a good job of it aswell.
Tutors within HE in FE were also able to add to the discussion with interviewee 5 explaining that,

*Having taught GCSE and A levels for a number of years earlier in my career to students of school age, I believe I possess many of the same skills and attributes of school teachers. Whilst I don’t think I can draw a comparison with primary teachers I do think the comparison with secondary teachers can be made and is a favourable one.*

The minority view from the quantitative data that FEC lecturers were not the equal of school teachers was also represented in the qualitative data by a HE in FE tutor. Interviewee 2 suggested that,

*We simply do not have their pressures or responsibilities. The public, and the relevant authorities do not see us as their equals, so why should we?*

Perhaps a comment from one of the FE tutors (Interviewee 15) sums the situation up

*As the roles undertaken in F.E., H.E and compulsory education aim to meet the same end in terms of progression and development of the individual, each tier of the education system plays an equal and progressively, more developmental role in educating the population.*

The data collected from the sample would indicate that FEC lecturers are generally more confident in perceiving themselves as being the equal of school teachers than they were with HEI lecturers. To a large extent this may be due to the fact that may of the FEC tutors are involved with the 14 – 16 strategy and understand some of the role associated with teaching schoolchildren. They may be able to use this experience to make a more direct comparison of their skills and abilities with school teachers than they can with HEI lecturers.
7) Specialised Knowledge

To further investigate the perceived differences in identity between the sectors the sample were then asked if they thought that their students required a specialised and sector specific knowledge. The responses to this item indicated that FEC lecturers did feel that they possessed knowledge that was specialised and unique to their sector.

**Table 7** Responses to the statement “The students I teach require a specialised knowledge that university lecturers and school teachers don’t possess”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Totally disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Totally agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HE in FE</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE and FE</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>6 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FE</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>10 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>12 (30%)</td>
<td>8 (20%)</td>
<td>18 (45%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall 18 (65%) of the respondents agreed or totally agreed with the statement that their students required a specialised knowledge, 12 (30%) neither agreed nor disagreed whilst 2 (5%) totally disagreed. The HE and FE lecturers appeared most supportive of this statement with 8 (80%) agreeing or totally agreeing.

The qualitative results suggested that the FEC tutors tended to envisage this specialist knowledge in general terms of industrial or vocational experience. Interviewee 13 (FE tutor) relates his specialist knowledge to his vocational background claiming that,

*My learners’ training demands input that can only be given by someone who has been active in the motor vehicle area and understands the skills that the sector requires to ensure we produce tradesmen who can cope in the industry nowadays.*
This was echoed by interviewee 12 (FE tutor) who also linked specialist knowledge with vocational experience and qualifications,

> Our learners are enrolled on trade specific courses and therefore they require an expert in that field which is exclusive to those who are qualified in that particular area.

Some were more specific (if not always accurate) interviewee 17 (FE tutor) claimed that,

> I am not aware of any school or university lecturers having trained and qualified plumbing and gas knowledge.

Interviewee 2 (HE in FE) saw his understanding of the FE sector as his specialist knowledge,

> As a tutor of teachers for the [FE] sector, my skills and knowledge have to be specialised because my learners will be seeking employment in the sector. I think that it is my understanding of the sector that helps to give the course its validity

Others saw their specialist knowledge as adding something the learners had failed to acquire earlier in their academic journey, interviewee 15 (FE tutor) claimed,

> We often have to help our learners gain very basic competencies that they have not picked up in school for one reason or another. They need their academic ability building if they are to progress effectively at college.

When asked to explain what he meant by basic competencies he replied,

> It is sometimes the case whereby some learners require very basic English and math skills which they have not achieved in compulsory education.

He concluded by adding that

> Some of the students I teach require experience and knowledge in behavioural management that university lecturers do not possess because they don’t have to deal with some of the types of learner that are commonplace for us.
Interviewee 8 (HE and FE) typified the majority view amongst this group claiming that

I have a mix of skills and vocational and academic qualifications plus vocational experience and in addition to this I deal with students on FE and HE courses. I think that what I am trying to say is that my abilities are very broad as I deal with lots of age groups at lots of levels not forgetting basic and study skills. I am not limited to students on a single course dealing with a single discipline if that doesn’t produce a specialised knowledge then nothing will.

Not all of the interviewees agreed with these lines of thought, interviewee 9 another of the HE and FE tutors claimed that,

Every sector is intrinsically doing the same thing, that’s teaching students. Granted they [students] may be at different levels and ages but in the end we are all doing the same thing, in the same way with only minor variants. We should just face up to the fact that we are all teachers at the end of the day.

Interviewee 5 (HE in FE tutor) as in earlier discussions highlighted similarities between the sector claiming,

…in relation to vocational background and age perhaps but pedagogically no. Each sector deals with learners who have a different spectrum of support needs that are met with adaptations of generic solutions. In the end education is about matching the best approach to the learners that you are responsible for and this is done in all three of the sectors

A comment from interviewee 11 (HE and FE tutor) suggested that the individuals’ environment maybe the determining factor

Anyone with the appropriate experience and qualifications could teach my topic

On being asked to expand on this answer he added

I have a full career’s worth of engineering experience behind me as well as a teaching certificate, BA and MA. Anyone else who has done the same as me could do what I do in just the same way that if I had followed an academic route and got a Ph.D. I could be teaching at a university.
It would appear that many within the sample see their vocational experience and/or qualifications as emblematic of their sector specific specialist knowledge. There is a feeling amongst many that teaching in FE does require a knowledge and skill set not found elsewhere. There is also a suggestion however that all three sectors share use sector specific skills as a means to bring about similar ends in the education or training of their learners.

8) Research

An analysis of the level of research activity within the sample was undertaken with the descriptive statistics in table 8 indicating that the majority of the three groups were not involved in it.

**Table 8** Responses to the statement “I am engaged in research as part of my job role”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Totally disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Totally agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HE in FE</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE and FE</td>
<td>6 (60%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>10 (50%)</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FE</td>
<td>12 (60%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22 (55%)</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
<td>6 (15%)</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twenty two (65%) of the total sample disagreed or totally disagreed that they engaged in research as part of their job role compared to 8 (20%) agreeing or totally agreeing. As 4 (20%) of the sample involved in the 2 HE groups did indicate total agreement it can be inferred that at least some research activity is occurring within the sector. However it may be safely assumed that the majority of tutors within the sample as a whole are not engaged in research

The qualitative data indicated that there was some confusion as to the actual meaning of the term ‘research’. The term appears better understood by those who teach HE students whilst those who teach only FE students included course preparation, policy reading and other activities within the term. Strictly speaking whilst these activities may contain some research requirements they may be more properly regarded as a part of scholarly activity. This confusion may explain why 20% of the FE tutors agreed that research was part of their role. Interviewees 15, 16 and 19 (FE tutors) conceptualised research activity in the following ways

I am constantly looking into materials in order to develop, deliver and evaluate new programmes.

My profession is in a state of constant change and the policies regarding education make regular changes and I need to keep abreast with them all so I am constantly researching the policy documents to see how they affect me.

I use existing research to update all courses being delivered so that I can be sure my sessions are illustrated with contemporary ideas.

Whilst these interpretations contain research related activities within them they conceptualise it within a framework that is typical of the type of scholarly activity undertaken within FE rather than specific research to create new knowledge or writing for publication.

One of the HE and FE tutors (interviewee 10) understood the concept of research but declined to use it for personal reasons

I know about research methods and writing reports but don’t enjoy that sort of thing. I only use those types of skills if I have to as part of my MA
otherwise I use only library research skills to make sure that I’m up to date with current issues for my learners, and for my studies.

This reply provides an example of the concern that the QAA (2006) raised regarding FE staff teaching HE having little or no time for research because of long class contact hours.

Engagement with research activity as part of a tutors development was also recognised by interviewee 17 (FE Tutor). She made the point that the results of her research would be applied within her institution.

My latest [research] will form part of my Organisational project for the B.A and will result in a complete re-design and overhaul of management training across the institution.

When asked if she would be able to continue with this sort of research when her course finishes she claimed,

It is very unlikely unless I do it in my own time it was only because I saw a chance to apply my research project to a situation that had arisen at work that they realised that I was doing any research in the first place

The point was made by some of the HE in FE tutors that research was not a part of their contractual obligations and as such would not be supported by their college. Interviewee 2 claimed that,

FE conditions of service mean that there is currently no time allocation to undertake this – save by applying for external support eg YHELLN or undertaking research as part of a course of study.

Others indicated that despite a lack of support from their colleges it was possible to undertake research if it was funded by external agencies.

Interviewee 5 suggested that,

I have been lucky and have engaged in research as part of my academic development in attaining higher degrees. These experiences have allowed me to bid for research projects and buy time from the college to undertake
them. However when this money runs out so will my engagement with research as FECs don’t value academic research.

The tutor was then asked if he was likely to bid for research projects in the future so that his research could continue,

Yes, even though management support is at best tepid I would like to be involved in more research in the future as I think that the growth of HE in FE has and will stimulate a need for research if the sector is to aspire to an ethos of evidence based teaching. If it doesn’t do this then I feel that the service that will be offered by HE in FE will be inferior to that offered by HEIs.

The tutor was asked if he wished to develop a publication record and replied,

Yes, I don’t see any reason why not, although initially I will target the less well known journals I would hope that in time I could be published by some of the more prestigious ones.

When asked why he wanted a research record, did he think it would benefit him, he responded,

I think that having a research record will become an asset for my career as I think that HE in FE will have to engage with research at some point if it is to be taken seriously in the future. When and if this does happen a research record grounded within FE will have a high value.

It would appear from the data that research activity is not yet part of the FE tutors professional identity. Amongst those staff who teach on FE courses only the term is sometimes confused with scholarly activity. Whilst some of the staff with HE responsibilities would like to become active researchers, the present FE ethos does not appear to be supportive of this aspiration. If this situation is not changed the status gap between higher and further education based on research and identified by Robson (2006) will persist. If the status gap is allowed to remain it is likely to tarnish the image of HE within FE making it less attractive to prospective students in the future.
9) Teaching Preferences

The next analysis was an attempt to investigate any preferences staff involved in teaching HE may have in comparison to FE and thus didn’t involve staff who teach only on FE courses.

Table 9 Responses to the statement “I prefer teaching HE compared to FE”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Totally disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Totally agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HE in FE</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE and FE</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>6 (60%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six (60%) of the HE in FE tutors agreed or totally agreed that they preferred teaching HE compared to teaching FE. This is in contrast to the responses of the HE and FE tutors with 2 (20%) indicating this attitude. In total 6 (30%) of the sample agreed or totally agreed they preferred teaching HE compared to 4 (20%) who disagreed.

The qualitative data illustrated the majority view, from the descriptive statistics, amongst the HE and FE staff who indicated no preference for teaching either HE or FE,

Interviewee 7 (HE and FE) claimed that,

*I don’t care who or what I teach, why should I? My job is to teach students and I don’t see what difference it should make to me if they are HE or FE students. The only time this would make a difference is if the rate of pay for one group of students was better than the other.*

The views of Interviewee 9 (HE and FE) were similar but for different reasons,

*I am equally happy teaching either and at the end of the day the differences between them are often minimal and a change is as good as a rest, as they say. Sometimes it makes a nice change to teach at a higher or lower level*
but what counts for me is that I am teaching. For me that is the most important consideration…

Although the HE in FE staff indicated some preferences for teaching HE the claims of preference were often tempered by perceptions of some disadvantages associated with HE provision. Interviewee 3 (HE in FE tutor) claimed that,

I like teaching it, but do find the marking related to HE courses tedious.

Interviewee 1 (HE in FE tutor) revealed some aspects of his institutions management culture with his observation that,

I do prefer teaching it [HE], but much of the stifling ‘pseudo-academic’ bureaucracy smacks of FE inferiority complex

He cited the attitude and motivation of the students as one reason for his preference for teaching HE,

I feel my preference for teaching HE is simply that the students are often more committed to their courses, not always but more often than in FE and it is nice to teach people who share the aims of the award and want to do well

A further question asked if he believed that all HE students were better motivated than FE students,

No it is not all of them but I do believe that more of them [HE students] have an intrinsic motivation for coming onto the course when compared to the extrinsic motivation of many FE learners who attend to attain an EMA or because their parents tell them to etc etc

When asked if he simply preferred teaching adults as compared to younger students he replied,

Yes to some extent that is true, but it is more than an androgogical divide as I have taught adults on FE courses in the past such as Access and A level and I still feel that their approach was not as consistent as that displayed by many [HE in FE] students.
This was confirmed by interviewee 5 another HE in FE tutor who claimed,

*My present [HE] students are more engaged than my FE students in the past they exhibit a much more positive orientation towards the sessions their motivation is often intrinsic so yes I do prefer teaching HE rather than FE. Although I have to admit that the assessment of HE work is more taxing than how I remember FE assessment*

The data indicates that those teaching in HE in FE exhibit a preference for teaching HE courses over FE courses. Their reasons for this preference included better levels of motivation amongst HE students and higher levels of engagement. Those engaged in HE and FE displayed a much more balanced view and were much more likely to claim that they had little or no preference for teaching either type of course.

10) Lesson Preparation

The responses to this item support the concept discussed in section 4 Defining Professionalism that proposed that putting the needs of the student first was an indicator of professionalism within the sector. If this is the case it is perhaps unlikely that the tutors would put more effort or detail into preparing for one group of students than another.

**Table 10** Responses to the statement “My preparation for HE lessons is more detailed than for FE lessons”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Totally disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Totally agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HE in FE</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>6 (60%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE and FE</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>6 (60%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses in table 10 illustrate this concept with a majority of 12 (60%) tutors (involved with providing HE) disagreeing or totally disagreeing that their preparation for HE sessions was more detailed than for FE. However 2 (10%)
tutors, both from the HE in FE group agreed with the statement that their
preparation for their HE lessons was more detailed.

Typical of those disputing that their preparation for HE was more detailed than
for FE was interviewee 8 (HE and FE tutor) who claimed that,

All my lessons get the same amount of attention to detail, I wouldn’t dream
of putting more effort into one group than any other for any reason. It is
part of my philosophy to treat all students in the same way and give of my
best for them.

Interviewee 11 (HE and FE tutor) supported this stance stating,

The level of preparation for all my lessons is the same because I take my
teaching seriously and always have done. It would not be fair to one set of
students if I put less effort into the prep for their sessions than I did for
others. As I said earlier my students, all of them, always come first.

Some of the HE in FE tutors appreciated the freedom of working on HE
awards and felt that this impacted on their preparation, interviewee 4 claimed
that,

My preparation is as detailed as when I worked in just FE. My syllabus
however is much more open to my own interpretation than before so I often
have to develop my knowledge of a subject to a greater depth than I would
need for the prescribed content of the courses I taught in FE.

In much the same vein interviewee 1 claimed,

My levels of preparation are exactly the same for my HE sessions as they
were for my FE sessions however I do have greater latitude in choosing
how to represent the topics for HE awards which makes preparation easier
and more pleasurable

Whilst other HE in FE tutors felt that their HE preparation required more detail,
interviewee 2 suggested that,

Because the level I now teach at is greater I have had to ensure that I meet
the challenge of that level and provide teaching that is suitable and
appropriate. I want my modules to be of the same standard as comparable
uni modules so my preparation for them has had to be more detailed to
take account of critical and analytical skill requirements.
The data indicate that the level of preparation by the tutors for HE and FE teaching provision is generally comparable. Those tutors who indicated that their preparation for HE was more detailed than for FE claimed that this was a reflection of the extension of skills required of HE students and of themselves in teaching these concepts. Thus the differential level of preparation can be absorbed into the samples ideology of putting the students’ needs first.

11) Rewards of Teaching HE

Table 11 Responses to the statement “Teaching HE is more rewarding than teaching FE”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Totally disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither disagree or agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Totally agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HE in FE</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
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<td>4 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE and FE</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8 (40%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The descriptive statistics indicate that the HE in FE tutors are twice as likely to agree or totally agree with this statement when compared to the HE and FE tutors. However an equal amount of HE in FE tutors also totally disagreed with the claim. In total 40% of the sample totally disagreed with this statement compared to 30% who agreed or totally agreed with the statement with 30% remaining undecided.

Some of the tutors made no distinction regarding the rewards they received from teaching in either sector, interviewee 6 (HE and FE) claiming that,

_I find both equally rewarding with the type of learners that I teach – I love my job. Teaching is a calling, it is rewarding in any field of endeavour regardless of its level._
Interviewee 10 (HE and FE) made a similar point claiming that,

*The rewards from both [teaching HE and FE] are comparable the buzz you get from giving a good session is the same regardless of the classes level as is the downer from a poor session.*

However interviewee 8 (HE and FE) who found teaching HE more rewarding justified his view with the following,

*HE learners are far more willing to take ownership of their learning and subsequent progress. With some groups and topics I am able to undertake the role of a facilitator of constructivist learning because I know that the engagement and motivation of the learners is a powerful and trustworthy strategy in its own right*

Interviewee 5 (HE in FE) preferred the academic latitude that teaching on HE courses brought claiming,

*The relative academic freedom to interpret a syllabus in line with your own interests and strengths and the chance to teach individuals with informed views who want to contribute is refreshing after my time teaching just FE. The greater engagement and commitment of the HE learners makes the actual process of teaching less challenging and more rewarding than teaching FE*

It is perhaps in this and the preceding analysis that the emergence of a separate culture is beginning to be discernable in that those involved with HE are beginning to perceive differences in the demands of teaching within it. Whilst the emergence of this new culture is by no means inevitable there is a recognition, especially amongst the HE in FE tutors, that HE teaching may in some situations require a more detailed preparation and that involvement with it is intrinsically more rewarding than teaching FE. However this interpretation should be taken with caution because of the small sample size involved.

**Conclusions**
The data has presented a view of the sample’s professional identity that appears to be based on a largely homogeneous culture. In general the descriptive analysis indicated little variance in attitudes across the groups and this was confirmed by the qualitative analysis.

The professional identity of the sample can be described by the following points in that the majority of respondents,

- saw themselves primarily as being educators with few claiming a strong affiliation to their subject backgrounds,
- believed that they were true professionals and many justified this belief by subscription to the norm that the educational needs of the student must come first,
- perceived themselves to be the equal of university lecturers and school teachers and felt that they held sector specific and specialised knowledge,
- felt that research activity in the sense of creating new knowledge and writing for publication was not a part of their job role.

Those teaching only HE in FE shared many of the characteristics listed above but did show some signs of a professional identity of their own,

- research, for creating new knowledge and writing for publication, was better understood amongst this group and some were actively engaged in research projects,
- the greatest preference for teaching HE compared to FE was indicated by this group,
- more members of this group felt that teaching HE was more rewarding than teaching FE.
With regard to Trowler’s first two axes it can be extrapolated from the data that FE in general is clearly more engaged with teaching than research activity and its tutor’s are orientated towards skills based rather than discipline based education. Whilst it may well be assumed that FE places a greater focus on vocational concerns in preference to personal development there was evidence in the data to indicate that the sample maintained a focus on both aspects.

References


DFES (2003), The future of higher education, Cm5753, Norwich: The Stationary Office Limited.


