The impact of workplace learning on academic career path development in tertiary education

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Social Sciences at the University of Leicester

by

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Title: The impact of workplace learning on academic career path development in tertiary education

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Abstract

This research addresses the situated learning experiences of academics in workplaces by gaining insights into how communities of practice influence career development of academics in Cypriot public universities.

The study set out to explore academics’ lived experiences of community relations by taking into consideration the impact of power inequalities, access to resources, and their legitimate peripheral participation through the lens of Situated Learning Theory (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). To understand how academics develop their careers in Cypriot public universities, it was important to comprehend how they adapt to their disciplinary communities, engage with their peers, and perceive the existing support for learning and its outcomes.

The research was informed by an interpretive paradigm. A single case study approach was used to bring to the fore academics’ narratives about their participatory practices. The data were generated through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with twenty academics chosen through a combination of convenience and snowball sampling strategies. The research has been conducted during five and a half months (December 2012-May 2013). Academics’ experiences in CoPs were thematically analysed.

The findings revealed that academics’ career development cannot be properly understood without looking into social relations among scholars and the contextual factors within and across their CoPs. Even though this study challenged Lave and Wenger’s (1991) and Wenger’s (1998) theorisation, the research findings confirm the significance they placed on the mutual engagement of participants in practice, since task mastery on its own cannot be perceived as a prerequisite for academics’ full membership in CoPs. That is why the recommendations highlight the importance of an ongoing involvement of newcomers, who may face diverse forms of participation at the boundaries of CoPs, within the academic life of departmental communities. This is how they construct their academic identities and further develop their membership of the disciplinary CoPs.
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The list of abbreviations

CoP - Community of Practice
CV - Curriculum Vitae
CYAQAEE – the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Education
EHEA - European Higher Education Area
EU - European Union
HE - Higher education
HEIs - Higher education institutions
LPP - Legitimate peripheral participation
MOEC - The Ministry of Education and Culture in the Republic of Cyprus
NPM - New Public Management
RAE - Research Assessment Exercise
REF - Research Excellence Framework
QA - Quality Assurance
Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This chapter is the introduction to the thesis. It indicates the key components of the study and explains the research problem. The chapter is divided into seven sections, including this introductory part. The second section begins with an overview of the background of this research study and includes an explanation of its theoretical framework. It also outlines the research questions addressed in the thesis. The third section describes the significance of the study which is followed by an explanation of its main contributions to the existing debates in the research field. The fifth section presents the justification of the chosen methodological approach of the study. This also includes a brief description of the research design, the chosen method of data collection as well as the approach to data analysis. The sixth section presents the plan of the thesis, including an outline of each chapter. The final section is the conclusion. In this way, this chapter provides insights into the rationale for undertaking this research, its significance and expected contributions.

1.2. Background to the research study

The higher education (HE) landscape in European countries has faced a number of challenges for the last few decades due to increased institutional and governmental demands (Leathwood and Read 2013; Teelken 2012; Kolsaker 2008; Deem 2006; Davies and Thomas 2002). What we know about the changes in higher education institutions (HEIs) is largely based upon the studies of academic work (Teelken 2012; Davies and Thomas 2002). However, my engagement with the literature on HE has
increased my awareness of the subsequent transformations of academic workplaces (Smith and Rust 2011; Buckley and Toit 2010; Warhurst 2008) and academic careers (McAlpine 2012; Dany et al. 2011; Duberley et al. 2006; Huisman et al. 2002).

In the context of globalisation in HE, all attempts to advance both social equity and economic outcomes have influenced the way in which HEIs function nowadays (Porter and Vidovich 2000). This has caused changes in university governance (Valsan and Sproule 2008), resulting in new forms of control over academics (Leathwood and Read 2013; Teelken 2012). These transformations, in turn, have created debates on whether academics are bound to one institution (Dany et al. 2011) or multiple communities (James 2007), and whether they are awarded tenure as a particular incentive to develop their working habits (Faria and Monteiro 2008). Although much has been written on the impact of new-managerialist practices on academic work (Leathwood and Read 2013; Teelken 2012; Davies and Thomas 2002), little attention is paid to academics’ views on the perceived opportunities and barriers to their development. It can be argued however, that these insights may function as a source of support for academics’ careers in light of changes in HEIs (Valsan and Sproule 2008).

As the next chapters will show, researchers have explored approaches to the professional development of new academic staff through mentoring arrangements, induction and socialisation. What remains to be understood however, is the extent to which community relations influence the development of academics’ identity (both novice and ‘old-timers’), including those who experience transition periods of re-entry. Thus, this research will extend the existing perspective on scholars’ development by looking beyond early-career academics’ experiences.

Accepting that an academic is a member of a HEI with a number of contractual roles and responsibilities (Harland and Staniforth 2003), it can be argued that academics’ career development can be best understood in line with the analysis of their workplace context. The latter may either encourage and assist academics’ development or negatively affect their participation, resulting in isolated practices (Barrett et al. 2009; Viskovic 2005). Thus, in the current study the complex nature of academics’ participatory practices will be explored from a dynamic standpoint, particularly in light of the ‘expansive-restrictive continuum’ (Fuller and Unwin 2003). Among the various
ways to achieve this is to look at academic communities of practice (CoPs) as an exclusive site for learning and development of individuals (Lave and Wenger 1991).

As the next chapter will show, despite an increased number of qualitative studies of academic CoPs, more critical use of the CoP theory (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998) when addressing the current trends in HE is required. This is because the existing studies are mostly focused on a certain aspect of academic work (research or teaching), excluding the influences of the wider socio-economic climate on academics’ participatory practices. Even though there were attempts to describe academic CoPs by recognising the current influences of the knowledge economy (Buckley and Toit 2010), these findings are mostly quantitative in nature and do not provide rich explanatory reflections on academic practices. Thus, further research and more interpretive insights into individual academics’ participation (including power relations leading to isolation or ‘lateral’ moves across CoPs (James 2007)) are needed to ensure that practice-based recommendations are evidence-based. To overcome the limitations of the existing studies, the current research will focus on the situated learning experiences of academics (Lave and Wenger 1991) by exploring how CoPs influence career development of academics in Cypriot public universities.

The rationale for choosing the Cypriot context for this research is my interest in contributing to a better understanding of academics’ development in Cypriot public HE. Due to a relatively short history of Cypriot public HE that commenced with the first established university in 1989 (http://www.highereducation.ac.cy), there is currently a research gap in understanding the influences of working environment on academic career development. Generally, there are limited studies undertaken on Cypriot HE (Zembylas et al. 2012; Iacovidou et al. 2009; Tsiakkiros and Pashiardis 2002; Pashiardis 1998) and these are not directly related to the research area which will be explored in the current study.

Consequently, this study will focus on the nature of participatory practices of academics as a vehicle for the nature of their work activities (Jawitz 2009), their learning and identity development. For this reason, it will be particularly useful to explore how academics engage with their peers and perceive the existing support for their development. That is why the origins of academics’ situated learning through the
analysis of their legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) (Lave and Wenger 1991), as well as power relations and access to resources within academic CoPs, will be qualitatively explored. At the core of this research is the notion of how academics become full members of their CoPs and whether this facilitates their career path development.

The above considerations have been condensed into the five qualitative research questions of this study, which aim to:

1. Examine whether the barriers to workplace learning have an impact on the forms of participation of academics within and beyond CoPs.
2. Analyse the extent to which community relations influence career development of academics:
   a. Explore whether power inequalities between academics impact upon their workplace learning within CoPs.
   b. Review the impact of access to resources within academic CoPs on academic career development.
3. Determine the extent to which new members of academic departments in the process of their legitimate peripheral participation become the key players for the transformation of CoPs.
4. Determine the impacts of new managerialism in Cypriot public universities on career development of academics.
5. Explain the insights that can be gained into academic careers (in the face of changes in public universities) and how this might be further supported.

1.3. Significance of the study

Having considered the background of this study, this section will justify the rationale for conducting research in the chosen field. The importance of this research comes from its capacity to add to the literature on CoPs (by challenging the existing theorisation of Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998) and to the studies on HE. Moreover, this study will shed light on participatory practices of academics within a unique context (Cypriot public universities). To date there has been very little research that has looked at
academic career, academic CoPs and workplace learning of academics in the framework of Situated Learning Theory (Lave and Wenger 1991) in the Cypriot context. The current study will respond to the existing research gap by exploring the complex nature of disciplinary communities with a prime focus on the existing controversies in the literature (Smith and Rust 2011; Churchman and Stehlik 2007) that have problematised the explanation of how academics are developed and supported. In other words, this current research work will offer a more expansive view on the extent to which multiple communities in which academics are operating impact upon their workplace learning and career development. This in turn, will add value to the previous work on academic CoPs.

Furthermore, this research will challenge the notion of LPP (Lave and Wenger 1991) as a means of understanding workplace learning (Fuller et. al. 2005) and its influence on academics’ development. This study will question whether there are any differences between ‘old-timers’ and newcomers in terms of their learning experiences while maintaining the continuity of academic CoPs. Moreover, the research will explore whether newcomers (with peripheral or boundary roles) (James et al. 2015) become key players for the transformation of CoPs.

The current research comes at a time when new insights into academics’ lives are required in light of an increased interest in Cypriot public HE and its modernisation. This research will explore academics’ narratives on community relations along with the transformations in HE, and thus will provide a more comprehensive framework for the notion of academics’ development in workplaces.

1.4. **Expected contributions of the research**

This research is designed to gain a deeper understanding of academics’ participatory practices within disciplinary communities in light of ‘the expansive-restrictive continuum’ of learning environments (Fuller and Unwin 2003). A central contribution of this research to the existing literature on CoPs comes from the analysis of the peripheral participation of academics who are members of multiple CoPs. In so doing, the study will explore challenges novice and experienced academics face as they seek to
achieve full membership. Thus, this study will question the notion of LPP as set out by Lave and Wenger (1991) and explain that academics are likely to experience their LPP at different stages of their career development. These findings will contribute to the extensive body of knowledge on workplace learning practices and will add clarification to the existing debates on the nature of academic CoPs and their boundaries (Smith and Rust 2011; James 2007; Churchman and Stehlik 2007).

Moreover, this study will add insights into Wenger’s (1998) considerations of power by exploring the existing micro-politics in departmental CoPs and the role of core members. In applying the CoP theory, attention will be paid to the wider dynamic context of HE that has become significant in shaping academics’ forms of participation and their identities (James 2007). Consequently, this study will facilitate further research in the framework of Situated Learning Theory in order to pursue even deeper inquiry into academics’ experiences in multiple communities and how their identities are mediated by power-constrained relations.

Additionally, this research will advance existing knowledge on the required support for academics by promoting the idea of mutual practices with a view to enhancing their engagement within their CoPs. This will challenge a conventional assumption regarding mentorship and reveal its highly valued purpose for the development of collaborative relationship between newcomers and ‘old-timers’ within disciplinary communities. As a result, the importance of looking into the means which facilitate open communication between newcomers and ‘old-timers’ will be considered essential to the creation of an ‘expansive’ workplace learning environment (Fuller and Unwin 2003).

Finally, this research study is timely in advancing knowledge to address the existing research gap on academic CoPs, in light of the current reforms in Cypriot HE regarding the assessment framework at a national level. By heightening awareness of possible problems that academics (public HEIs) face, the results of this research will challenge ideological stands held in Cypriot society (Panagiotidis and Stavrinidis 2012). Overall, this study, with its strong interest in academics’ workplace learning experiences, acts as an intermediary between academics and policymakers in Cyprus in order to explore the existing restrictions and challenges in public HEIs. In addition, this study will facilitate a dialogue among academics on a cross-national level by adding research evidence to
the relevant studies in the European context. Thus, researchers will be placed in a more advantageous position by having another point of reference.

1.5. Methodology adopted for the study

This study will be informed by an interpretive paradigm. As will be explained in Chapter Four, a qualitative research design is chosen due to the nature of the studied phenomena. A narrative inquiry into academics’ learning experiences will be adopted in order to grasp the whole complexity of participatory practices in academic CoPs. This research will be conducted in the form of a single case study (Cypriot public universities).

The research will apply in-depth, semi-structured interviews (under the umbrella of biographical research) as a method that will allow a deeper understanding of academics’ lived stories in line with their professional lives (Creswell 2003; Roberts 2002; Goodson and Sikes 2001). The choice of the research method is justified by its capacity to explore participants’ experiences in the context of academic CoPs (Bryman 2008) and how they perceive themselves in their working settings. The use of in-depth, semi-structured interviews will provide a way of understanding the participants’ experiences as told narratives (Bryman 2008; Creswell 2003). Biographical data of academics (from their CVs) will be analysed prior to the interviews in order to collect background information (Bryman 2008).

In adopting a narrative inquiry in the current study, the main emphasis will be on exploring the stories academics have generated about their learning practices and the importance of the context to their development (Roberts 2002; Clandinin and Connelly 2000). To gain deeper and broader insights into their lived experiences, academics’ narratives will be organised thematically (Bryman 2008; Riessman 2002). Thematic analysis will help to identify the common themes across academics’ detailed stories, in relation to the research questions (Braun and Clarke 2006).
1.6. Thesis plan

The thesis includes eight chapters. Following the introductory chapter, the literature review will provide the theoretical framework of the research which is presented in Chapters Two and Three. The fourth chapter will give a detailed explanation of the chosen research methodology and the research design of the study and will include five interrelated sections. This will be followed by the analysis and discussion of the research findings thematically divided into three chapters (Five, Six and Seven).

Chapter Five includes the analysis of the origins of participatory practices of academics within CoPs, their views on workplace learning and the existing barriers to situated learning activities within disciplinary communities. Chapter Six presents academics’ views on power relations and access to resources in academic CoPs. Chapter Seven provides insights into the nature of academic workplaces in Cypriot public universities and the subsequent influences on academic career development. This is followed by the description of the key findings of the research which are presented in Chapter Eight, including theoretical and practical implications. It will also include an overview of the potential directions for future research.

1.7. Conclusion

This introductory chapter gave an indication of the background of the current research, its main aim and the emerging research questions. The importance and the value of the research were presented as well as its expected contributions to the current knowledge in the research field. This chapter included a brief description of the analytical framework and the research methodology applied in the study. It gave an overview of the thesis structure. The next two chapters will present the theoretical framework of the research.
Chapter 2

Higher education and academic communities of practice

2.1. Introduction

In addressing the main aim of this research study, it is important to gain insights into academics’ workplace learning experiences in academic CoPs in Cypriot public HE. For the purposes of this research, both participation in activities with others at work (Billett 2001; Lave and Wenger 1991) and learning at a workplace itself (Eraut and Hirsh 2007) are central to understanding how academics develop their careers. More specifically, this research explores the extent to which community relations influence learning and identity formation of academics (James 2007; Gelade 2007) by taking into consideration the impact of power inequalities and access to resources. Furthermore, the study attempts to determine whether new members in the process of their LPP are the key players for the transformation of academic CoPs and whether a systematic application of management methods across HE (Deem 2006) challenges their career development.

The literature review is divided into two chapters (Two and Three). Chapter Two contains three sections, including this introductory part. The second section explains how learning is operationalised in the current research. This is followed by a detailed analysis of the concept of a CoP including the existing critique of the CoP theory (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998; Wenger et al. 2002). It is admitted that although much is currently known about academic work and careers, the impacts of participatory practices (as a source of learning) on academics’ career development have not been fully explored. As a result, the main focus of the third section is placed on how academics are developed in CoPs in light of the changing policies and practices within and beyond the university environment. The following two sub-sections include the analysis of power inequalities, access to resources in regard to academic CoPs and the
role of LPP, including the main arguments against its ‘unidirectional nature’ (Colley
and James 2005).

Chapter Three provides an outline of the national educational policy of Cypriot public
HE by explaining its historical background and the current trends. The second section
considers the impacts of new managerialism on HE and the main influences of
institutional contexts on academic practices by drawing on the changing roles of
academics due to globalisation (Porter and Vidovich 2000). The last two sections gain
insights into academic freedom and the notion of academic career which has become
less predictable in light of the current transformations in HE. The final thoughts are
presented in the conclusion.

The literature review is structured to provide critical insights into the relevant research
in order to develop a conceptual framework, to demonstrate the complexity of the
studied phenomena and to justify the importance of the topic. It also indicates the main
limitations of previous studies and sets the context for making a theoretical contribution
to the research field.

2.2. Communities of Practice: the framework of participatory
practices

*How is the concept of ‘learning’ operationalised in the current study?*

To understand how learning is operationalised in the current study necessitates a critical
consideration of the existing assumptions in the learning discourse (Lawy 2006).
Historically, the *behaviouristic metaphor* postulating that learning is associated with
behavioural changes in response to external stimuli (Pavlov, Watson, Thorndike, and
Skinner) was replaced by the *acquisition metaphor* (Sfard 1998) or the cognitive
perspective (Piaget, Vygotsky, Leont’ev). The latter approach considers learning as
cognitive changes in mental states which are exposed in action on the world (Edwards
2005). Even though these perspectives are still applied in educational settings (Cross
1989), there has been a shift in methodology away from traditional learning theories to
understanding the complexities prevalent in the learning process (Beckett and Hager 2002). This transformation has occurred from the existing dissatisfaction with the paradigm of learning as acquisition of knowledge to fully explain how people learn in formal and non-formal educational settings (Fuller 2007). Researchers, therefore, started considering the role of active social participation as a facilitator of cognitive changes in the minds (Cohen 1994).

A new metaphor of learning as participation highlights the central role of the context and relations among participants. Indeed, the cultural-historical social activity theory has been revolutionary to changing the focus on learning from acquisition of knowledge to participation (Engeström 1991). For proponents of this theory, the complexity of learning derives from its ‘situatedness’ in socio-culturally and historically constructed activities which encompass a practitioner, his/her colleagues, the conceptual and practical tools and the shared objects (Engeström 1991: 267).

Even though Lave and Wenger (1991) followed Vygotsky’s argument that active participation is a necessary condition for learning, they provided a more critical perspective on learning in the ‘lived-in’ world without engagement with formal educational settings (Fuller 2007; Edwards 2005). The central notion of their theory has become the interaction between novices and experts and the processes by which newcomers move towards full participation in CoPs. While Lave and Wenger (1991) were initially focused on the explanation of learning through apprenticeship (they grounded their theory on five ethnographic studies of apprenticeship), they made a significant contribution to the development of theory of learning as a social practice (Hughes et al. 2007).

Following Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998), the theorising of learning through the lens of Situated Learning Theory was adopted in the current research study in order to explore workplace learning experiences of academics (Billett 2004; Lee et al. 2004; Billett 2001) for a number of reasons. Firstly, to fully explore how academics learn in CoPs where they act as partners in developing mutual understanding of practices (Eraut 2004) which are of primary importance to their identity formation (James 2007), a standard paradigm of learning as acquisition of knowledge (Beckett and Hager 2002) provides an inadequate basis. This is because it does not allow the
researcher to reveal academics’ social relations that embody working processes necessary for becoming full participants through negotiation of meanings (Billett and Somerville 2004; Boud and Solomon 2003; Pillay et al. 2003).

Secondly, it is equally important to explore what hinders or restricts academics’ participation and engagement with work activities and colleagues, since such practices can constrain the continuity of the existing communities and academics’ development (Fuller and Unwin 2004; 2003). To achieve this, it is important to explore the relevant academic practices and what they embody, how academics adapt and engage with these practices. In explaining this, a conceptual framework of ‘expansive and restrictive working environments’, which was developed by Fuller and Unwin (2004; 2003) based on the prime concern of Engeström (1991), is applied in the current study. In particular, the elements of ‘restrictive’ working environments are of special interest due to the emerged changes in HE that have been significant in reshaping the nature of academic CoPs and their boundaries (James 2007).

Thirdly, the Situated Learning Theory (Lave and Wenger 1991) is aligned with my epistemological position which is social constructivism. This means that workplace learning outcomes are considered as inseparable from individuals’ experiences in certain environments (Edwards 2005). As a result, learning is theorised in the current study as continually integrated with increasing participation in social practice and negotiation of meaning through gaining access to the full array of ongoing activity towards full membership in CoPs that implies changes in individuals’ identities (Lave and Wenger 1991). Prior to the analysis of the studies conducted in relation to HE, the following section opens with the conceptualisation of the term community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998; Wenger et al. 2002) by moving towards the analysis of academic CoPs in line with the changes in HE context.

2.2.1. The concept of Communities of Practice

It has been widely acknowledged that the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and their considerations of the key interlinked concepts - situated learning, legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) and communities of practice (CoPs) - provided theoretical insights
for many researchers in the field of workplace learning (Hughes et al. 2007; Fuller et al. 2005; Billett 2004), including the current study. Over the past decades, the CoP theory has been developed in a number of directions, including a significant shift from an analytical to a practitioner tool that has increased its popularity across disciplines (Cox 2013; Kislov et al. 2011).

Initially, Lave and Wenger (1991: 98) considered CoP as ‘a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice’. According to this view, a central condition for learning has become associated with increasing participation of individuals in communities and collaboration within the domain of practice rather than intentional in-class instruction (Barrett et al. 2009; Fuller 2007; Trowler and Knight 2000). In his later publication, Wenger (1998) placed greater emphasis on the concept of learning by making adjustments to its main notion. He strengthened this definition by describing learning as an integral part of our lives which involves experiencing (giving meaning to a common task), doing (mutual engagement in action), belonging (to a CoP) and becoming (creating personal histories in the context of a CoP). In other words, participation in different CoPs throughout our lives provides the social arena for the evolution of how we think, act and behave (Tummons 2012) that leads to the transformation of our identities (Bush et al. 2014). Similarly, Fuller and Unwin (2003) argued that participation in multiple CoPs facilitates identity formation and provides more expansive opportunities for personal development.

For Wenger (1998) what makes a CoP be different to any social network is that relations between individuals and their ways of understanding the world are mutually developed, negotiated and shared. Central to this explanation are participants’ practices which are coherently and harmonically organised through mutual engagement in pursuing an enterprise that creates a shared understanding of what brings members together, their relations of mutual accountability (joint enterprise) and a set of communal repertoire of resources (Wenger 1998). He indicated that participation enables practitioners through their contribution to a gradually developed meaning and resources to shape their own experiences and those of the community. Similarly, Jawitz (2007) argued that building up confidence and competence should involve engagement in social interaction within CoPs.
Another striking term *reification* is viewed as a process which involves a proliferation when participants give form to their activities by making sense of their shared experience, negotiating of its meaning and transforming it into a more fixed form - ‘thingness’ (Wenger 1998: 58-59). When it comes to illustrating how learning through participation deepens, Tummons (2012) similarly argues that artefacts provide newcomers with a more affordable access to practice by embedding a common knowledge base on which participants rely when facing new situations. Indeed, shared artefacts allow individuals to be intimately connected with the history of practice in a relevant community and at the same time renegotiate meanings in new contexts (Wenger 1998). It can be argued therefore that participation and reification continually converge as the two complementary dimensions that constitute collaborative learning (Wenger 1998). However in contrast, James (2007: 132) argues for a more complex nature of the negotiations of shared meanings and identity formation of individuals, due to the dynamic processes of CoPs which are shaped by a wider institutional context. The emergence of CoPs therefore, does not always lead to collaborative learning through coherent mutual engagement based on respect and trust (James *et al.* 2015; Hong and O 2009; Fuller *et al.* 2005).

Based on the existing critique of the CoP theory, the current study considers a more ‘dynamic’ setting of CoPs (James *et al.* 2015; Fuller *et al.* 2005) in contrast to ‘stable’ and ‘cohesive’ sites as explained by Lave and Wenger (1991). In dynamic contexts of workplaces, members can experience barriers to learning due to radical changes in economy (Fuller and Unwin 2004; 2003). Additionally, these barriers can be created because of the existing power relations between members, which determine the nature of a CoP, its operation and boundaries (Fuller *et al.* 2005). Even though Lave and Wenger (1991) did not exclude the possibility of having limited access to learning, their explanation of the reasons why communities embed different learning opportunities that influence participatory practices of individuals (Fuller *et al.* 2005) and their identities (James 2007) remains incomplete.

Despite Lave and Wenger’s (1991) and Wenger’s (1998) attempts to describe relations of power, they never fully explored conflictual practices and power inequalities within a CoP and its wider context (James 2007; Fuller *et al.* 2005). Indeed, Lave and Wenger (1991) just initiated their explanation of legitimate peripherality as empowering
(intensive participation, increasing involvement in central practices) and disempowering (restricted access to central practices) positions. Even though Wenger (1998) attempted to conceptualise the notion of power as being central to social theory by enriching its meaning beyond its empowering and disempowering notion, he did not provide any further explanation.

In arguing that the internal dynamics of a workplace can affect individuals’ access to learning, Rainbird et al. (2004) and Fuller et al. (2005) recognised that the role of formal learning and its relevance to individuals’ interests and needs should be considered with the broadest possible attention because personal development is configured by different institutional arrangements. As a result, despite the influential contributions of the CoP theory (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998), more nuanced considerations of its main aspects have caused further constructive critique (Tight 2015). When it comes to explaining the notion of learning through LPP once a newcomer joins a CoP, Fuller and Unwin (2004) criticise Lave and Wenger (1991) for associating LPP to all workplace learning without broadening their focus on other types of participation. Fuller et al. (2005) took a more critical stance and argued that individuals continue learning even after they achieved their full membership in CoPs.

The role of a CoP framework (Wenger 1998) in HE research has also been problematised. For example, Tummons (2014) argues for a more critical understanding of the CoP theory, especially when solving ‘a pedagogy problem’ and considering assessment in HE. He argues for unjustified attempts to ignore the notion of ‘learning architecture’ as a design for learning (place, equipment, people and activities), which encompasses resources that allow learning to happen. Thus, his analysis of the notion of ‘learning architecture’ is useful for the current study in thinking about the way in which academics learn by participating in disciplinary communities, where teaching practice takes its central role. This is because, the concept of ‘learning architecture’, as Tummons (2014) argues, allows researchers in pedagogic studies to consider teaching as a component of an academic CoP repertoire and thus to overcome the existing theoretical misinterpretation. Additionally, Tummons (2014) argues for inconsistency of Quality Assurance (QA) policies in HE since the performativity system should ensure that only tangible aspects of a ‘learning architecture’ are measured, that is not the case for learning itself which is emergent, rich and unpredictable. Given the main aim of the
current study, the CoP theory is used to better understand academic career development via diverse forms of participation (James et al. 2015) and multiple membership across departmental and disciplinary boundaries (Malcolm and Zukas 2000).

2.3. The situated learning context of academic workplaces

This section examines the studies of learning in academic CoPs, which is situated in practice (Lester and Costley 2010) as opposed to the plain instructive formal teaching methods (Hager 2004). From the analysed literature it is evident that research on induction and socialisation of early-career academics has grown exponentially in recent years. For example, Knight and Trowler (1999) showed that induction is at the forefront of professional learning of new entrants in academic workplaces. Similarly, in their later study (Trowler and Knight 2000), they drew on the importance of communication with peers in daily practices for a quicker adaptation of novice academics to a new setting.

From a different perspective though, Warhurst (2008) in his research on the social learning of new lecturers also described similar features and acknowledged that lecturers, who are involved in knowledge intensive practices, need to be widely supported in order to establish their legitimacy. He provided us with the findings of his in-depth analysis of academics’ teaching experiences through the lens of Situated Learning Theory. Of special interest is his analysis of the situational ‘affordances’ of lecturers’ reflective learning, mentoring arrangements, and formal development programs. Indeed, an enhanced sense of collegiality through well-planned formalised mentoring increases the confidence of new university teachers and improves their performance (Mathias 2005). In other words, the provision of mentoring as part of ‘a formal curriculum’ plays an important role in influencing the way newcomers make sense of their workplace practices through professional discussions, resource sharing, and observation of how more experienced peers operate (Tummons and Ingleby 2012: 30).

By focusing on how new academics learn to assess student performance, Jawitz (2007) similarly indicated the importance of informal mentoring by more expert fellows in
building newcomers’ confidence in publishing and facilitating their entry into research communities. As new academics practise the community repertoire of shared meanings in a more fluent manner, their participation becomes more ‘full’, allowing them to acquire tacit knowledge that is necessary for the development of their competence. However, despite evidence about the practices of novice academics in their communities (Warhurst 2008; Yandell and Turvey 2007; Jawitz 2007), more research is required, since the existing studies do not fully consider the lived realities of experienced academics. To address this gap, the current study draws attention to the situated learning of academics at different stages of their career development (Billett 2001). Moreover, there is a need to gain a better understanding of the extent to which power inequalities and access to resources are critical to academics’ development, including LPP which is considered in the following section.

2.3.1. The notion of legitimate peripheral participation in academic practice

The notion of LPP introduced by Lave and Wenger (1991) describes a form of membership, a direction towards full participation in shared activities of a CoP and the relations between newcomers and ‘old-timers’. Even though LPP provides a way of becoming a full member of a CoP, this process may challenge individuals’ sense of identity. For example, only legitimate participants who are accepted by ‘old-timers’ and continuously interact with them, get access to community resources and opportunities for peripheral participation (Fuller et al. 2005; Lave and Wenger 1991).

The notion of peripheral participation as set out by Lave and Wenger (1991) explains the changes in newcomers’ involvement within CoPs, starting from passive activities (but alongside ‘old-timers’). In other words, peripheral participation serves a powerful role in CoPs, because it gives newcomers access to build up mutual relationships sustained around a relevant practice. This happens whilst newcomers communicate in a more community-specific way, undertake more responsibilities, and co-construct the meaning of more advanced practices that cause, in turn, changes in their identities (Lave and Wenger 1991). This also explains how a CoP achieves its continuity ‘over generations’ (Lave and Wenger 1991: 114) through mutually developed accountability of novices in relation to shared community resources (Warhurst 2008).
However, recent studies on novice academics have explored the differences in the nature of LPP compared to the initial explanation of Lave and Wenger (1991). For example, instead of gradual enhancement of skills, a newly qualified lecturer experienced a very quick transition towards full participation (Yandell and Turvey 2007). Importantly, the research data from different academic communities consistently emphasise the demanding and conflicting nature of the LPP of new academics due to the existing relations of power, authority (Jawitz 2007) and immediate transition of teachers into a new domain of practice (Viskovic 2005). Additionally, Viskovic (2005) questioned the continuity of CoPs since some ‘old-timers’ do not spend time and take responsibility to induct newcomers, that otherwise could have ensured the pace of development of a CoP that connects its past with its future. However, the existing support in meeting challenging tasks develops confidence (related to relationships and work itself) and thus encourages both novice and mid-career employees to learn (Eraut 2004).

The above studies contradict the notion of progressive involvement of academics in their community practices, accompanied by the development of competence and knowledge as explained by Lave and Wenger (1991). In other words, instead of supportive interaction, mutual work and collaborative culture (Ng and Pemberton 2013), academic CoPs nurture isolation and ‘competitive individualism’ (Yandell and Turvey 2007; Viskovic 2005). In an attempt to explain the development of academic CoPs based on academic rather than institutional interests, Smith and Rust (2011) paid attention to the danger of fragmented nature of academic CoPs along disciplinary lines. They showed that increased competition between HEIs prevents academics from developing and sustaining truly collaborative academic CoPs. In a similar vein, it is further argued that academic CoPs in the Australian HE context cannot be naturally developed due to the exerted performativity measures which directly influence academic work (Churchman and Stehlik 2007).

Moreover, a widening gap between teaching and researching (Robertson 2007) eventually undermines the role of academics and creates conflicting values in academic workplaces (James 2007). In these circumstances open communication between academics and their equal access to opportunities for development are restricted (Coaldlake and Stedman 1999). This has resulted in restructured and redefined forms of
academics’ participation beyond their institutions (Barrett et al. 2009). However this in turn, affects academics’ sense of belonging and their identity construction (James 2007), including early-career (Viskovic 2005) and more experienced academics (Mamtora 2004; Knight and Trowler 2000).

While the theme of supporting early-career academics (Castelló et al. 2015; Hemmings et al. 2013; McAlpine and Turner 2012) has been subject to a great deal of research, little attention is paid to established academics who experience transition periods of re-entry and negotiate their practices during their LPP (James 2007). Indeed, the learning process should be considered much broader including examples when ‘old-timers’ learn through their participation with newcomers who may be more qualified and experienced (Fuller et al. 2005). Even though Lave and Wenger (1991) indicated that ‘old-timers’ may experience insecurity due to the possibility of being forcibly displaced by newcomers, the situation where ‘old-timers’ get adapted to new workplaces (Fuller et al. 2005) received no attention.

In reality, academics make ‘lateral’ moves through networks and thus simultaneously undertake the roles of novices and ‘old-timers’ (James 2007). In other words, depending on the community, academics are likely to play peripheral roles (Wenger 1998) and function in ‘liminal’ spaces between different CoPs (James and Busher 2013). Even if they formally work in a department (based on their employment contract), the latter can be discursively constructed of several overlapping CoPs (e.g. teaching and research), even across disciplinary boundaries (Malcolm and Zukas 2000), each with its own shared repertoire, joint enterprise and mutuality (Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2003). Thus, for academics, forms of participation and identities continuously change as they become ‘long-established’ or experienced members who continue learning from the next set of newcomers (Fuller et al. 2005; Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2003: 16). Such forms of participation in academic CoPs can be better understood in light of the externally imposed changes which have been internally developed in HEIs (Bleiklie and Kogan 2007). The result of these transformations is that academics are likely to cross boundaries of CoPs.

Moreover, due to the intensification of academic work, academics might also be involved within CoPs organised for a specific purpose using a range of digital
technologies (e.g. social media, blogs) (James and Busher 2013). This explains how academics participate across different spheres of activities which are linked less by location but more by common interests (Castelló et al. 2015), and thus have a great influence on academics’ identity formation (James and Busher 2013). Lave and Wenger’s explanation of LPP as a means of understanding workplace learning (Fuller et al. 2005) limits our interpretation of such ‘lateral’ moves that may cause loss of status benefits and make experienced academics renegotiate their participation by redefining their identities (James 2007).

After all, once academics engage in multiple CoPs they are likely to reconcile their membership and change positions (related to research, teaching, administration, and leadership) (McAlpine and Amundsen 2009). Similarly, Castelló et al. (2015) admitted that belonging to different CoPs within one sphere of activity may require engagement with different practices that may cause congruence (fit) (Edwards 2007) or lack of congruence (misfit) in identity formation that may provide, in turn, rival interests between individuals and CoPs. These negotiations are ongoing and can be differently resolved based on tensions across CoPs which may result in autonomous and isolated practices of individuals, especially when they are kept at a marginal space (Wenger 1998). This is because the ‘established orthodoxies’ may be challenged by the expert power of experienced newcomers (James 2007: 139) and thus may restrict their access to resources for learning and development. That is why belonging to multiple CoPs may comprise certain weaknesses for individuals’ development and restrict their enabled periphery (Lave and Wenger 1991). The above observation requires further explanation of the existing sources of power (Busher et al. 2014) across multiple CoPs, including possible constraints that undermine the development of academics into full members. This is the prime focus of the following section.

2.3.2. Power relations, access and control within academic communities of practice

As argued in the introductory chapter, internationalisation and globalisation of HE (De Wit 2011) have a significant impact on communities in which academics are involved (Becher and Trowler 2001). Although the existing literature gives details on the
competing requirements towards measurable outcomes of academic work (Kolsaker 2008), many studies lack a clear explanation of how power can be viewed as an element of academic CoPs. Even though a number of studies tended to focus on the increased centralised power of HEIs towards academics (Kolsaker 2008; Bleiklie and Kogan 2007), including the entrusted power of the funding system (Frey 2010), the tensions between academics and CoPs due to conflicting identities and norms (Hong and O 2009) or between a CoP and its constellation (between a department and a whole organisation) (Busher et al. 2007), are not yet fully explored. Given the existing fragmentation of academic CoPs (Smith and Rust 2011), there is a need to better understand the micro-politics within academic communities or conflicting practices across different CoPs (Hong and O 2009) and how these affect academics’ actions, identities and beliefs (Wilkins et al. 2012).

Even though the CoP theory (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998) has informed the theoretical framework of the current research, the existing critique about its deficiency to explain the role of conflicts, power relations and control (James 2007; Rainbird et al. 2004) was considered. Despite the fact that recent studies (Contu and Willmott 2003) have acknowledged Wenger’s (1998) contribution in considering rivalry, power and conflictual experiences of different practices, what remains to be explored is the analysis of their origins, their impact on the formation of CoPs and internal operations (James 2007). Similarly, Wenger (1998) can be critiqued for his insufficient explanation of unequal power relations as an aspect of identity formation, but not as an aspect of practice (Fox 2000). As a result, in the current study the notion of power is enriched in line with Fuller’s et al. (2005) considerations on its innate facilitating and inhibiting role in community relations’ development and the argument of Busher et al. (2007) regarding the power of social and political contexts on individuals’ choices of actions.

It is apparent that the emerging literature has explored how individuals, who exert control over some resources, including opportunities to learn, can influence practices of others (Fuller et al. 2005). This occurs either through introduction of policies that remove obstacles for learning or through setting up boundaries to participation (Fuller et al. 2005). There is also an indication that by controlling entry to central practices ‘old-timers’ disable newcomers’ peripheral participation and thus their further development into full practitioners (Hughes et al. 2007). This is reiterated by Busher et al. (2007)
who argue that the role of members with power in community is critical in facilitating or preventing the process of adaptation of newcomers, since they can influence the processes through which newcomers learn.

Indeed, what individuals may experience when entering new CoPs is disorientation due to new culture, social structures and power differences between participants (Busher and James 2015). Thus, the role of ‘old-timers’ in helping newcomers to adapt their practices in appropriate ways is crucial. However, ‘old-timers’ do not always take responsibility to support newcomers in providing them access to central practices since they do not accept these duties as part of their work (Viskovic 2005) or they feel insecure in front of newcomers (Lave and Wenger 1991). This explains why the existing members might negatively perceive newcomers and question the reasons they give for joining the community (Busher 2005).

Consistent with the above findings on power imbalances, another concern has been raised by Hong and O (2009: 320) who argued that differences in hierarchical status between employees (permanent and temporary staff) might result in power asymmetry. This recognises inequality towards the less powerful groups in terms of the given access to their participation in relevant practices. In this context, established practitioners with ‘formally ascribed’ power dictate the extent to which members with inferior power will be accepted as legitimate participants (Bush et al. 2014: 804). This explains why core members are likely to have greater bureaucratic authority to control the outcomes of negotiations than more peripheral members (Bush et al. 2007).

Moreover, there are groups within a sociopolitical HE context such as professional bodies, agencies of QA which carry reified distribution of formal power that directly influences academics’ negotiation of values (Bush et al. 2007), commitment to developing a shared repertoire and the nature of CoPs (James 2007). More about this is discussed in sections 3.2 and 3.3 on the impacts of new managerialism on academic work and growth of illusion regarding academic freedom.

The pertinent question though that emerges in line with the importance of dynamic issues of power to the development of academics who confront diverse forms of participation (James et al. 2015), is about the boundaries of CoPs (Malcolm and Zukas
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2000). Given the HE context, there are likely to be many informal (e.g. interest groups) and formal CoPs (e.g. departments, committees, administrative departments) with many academics being participants in several of them, thus having multiple membership. In this context Wenger (1998: 104-105, 110) can be critiqued for his limited explanation of unequal participation across boundaries by accepting that CoPs are not in isolation from the world and thus individuals are likely to experience multimembership through different ‘channels of connection’. They include (1) the process of introducing elements of practice from one CoP into another by building relations with the outside (‘brokering’) and (2) ‘boundary objects’ such as documents, instruments etc. (Wenger 1998). For example, academics who participate in multiple CoPs may relate to each other through such ‘channels’ that might give them an informational advantage and shape their professional identities due to their legitimacy to influence the development of practices and address contradictions (Wenger 1998: 103). In this context, it can be argued that peripherality can allow ‘brokers’ to observe and negotiate by participating across boundaries (Burt 2007). This is the case for teachers who work in different departments and incorporate views of each department into the practices of the other (Bush et al. 2007: 4). Such multiple membership can bring diverse learning opportunities for CoPs (through adopting a new perspective or observing new practices) (Wenger 1998: 109) that is likely to reinforce constant renegotiation of core and peripheral practices.

However, what is more interesting is that being a member of multiple communities and working at their boundaries can create potential difficulties for development, and even long-standing members may be kept in marginal positions (Wenger 1998). This happens when ‘brokers’ are ignored by ‘old-timers’ who facilitate interactions (Bush et al. 2007) or not legitimised as peripheral participants. This means that not all members of a CoP equally influence the way in which the repertoire of practice and its associated values are negotiated (Bush et al. 2007). Alternatively, they are likely to face restricted access to the central practices of a CoP. This helps to explain why individuals whose views differ significantly from community’s norms are likely to become marginal members (Lave and Wenger 1991).

Yet as noted by James and Busher (2013), community boundaries might comprise a series of ‘liminal’ states when participants are perceived as ‘in betweeners’ that may
cause a certain ‘shock’ of adjustment (Goodwin 2007) and even rivalries with other members (Hughes et al. 2007). This is because of simultaneously perceived contradicting feelings of intensive engagement with other members, compliance to the existing rules and lack of knowledge about community practices (James and Busher 2013). Indeed, failure to fit to a common identity of a new community might make members feel isolated (Humphreys and Brown 2002: 434). Thus, overlooking the possible negative experiences of participating at the boundaries of multiple CoPs in light of the existing reorganisation of institutional structures in HE (James 2007), can seriously weaken the analysis of academics’ development.

It can be argued therefore, that ‘the expansive-restrictive continuum’ (Fuller and Unwin 2004; 2003) has the potential for understanding possible enablers and barriers that both novices and ‘old-timers’ face along their development in CoPs. The expansive approach is subject to intensive participation, including extended job roles, wider opportunities to engage with different CoPs, incorporating learning practices both on-the-job and off-the-job. It provides inspiration and challenge for learners, because individuals are supported as they are exposed to different learning opportunities and their participation is directly linked to certain practices of a relevant CoP. This means that newcomers are legitimately participating at the periphery of a new CoP that allows them to be engaged and negotiate the meaning of the existing practices and thus to have potentials to be developed into full participants.

The expansive approach offers a broader perspective on situated learning since it explains how multiple membership creates ‘synergies between personal and organizational development’ (Fuller and Unwin 2004: 131) through the creation of reified ‘learning objects’ (Fuller and Unwin 2003: 422). These synergies are achieved due to trustful relationships between individuals which encourage them to negotiate openly their activities and shape their community experiences that become more solid (Tummons 2014). Similarly, Ashton and Sung (2002) noted that the process of building mutual trust among individuals is an important condition for the free flow of information and knowledge in a community of workers.

In contrast, the restrictive approach explains how barriers and narrow access limit the provision of support to learning opportunities and restrict participation in multiple
CoPs. Whilst Wenger (1998) considered disagreements, competition and conflicts as forms of participation which have a greater effect resulting in commitment rather than conformity, Fuller et al. (2005) admitted that power relations, which surface quite naturally among participants and between CoPs, may negatively influence effectiveness of CoPs and restrict full participation of their members.

Given the existing transformations in Cypriot HE, including a growth in temporary academic contacts, more research is needed in examining how participation in multiple academic CoPs influences academics’ development. The current study therefore, will gain more insights into the key changes in academic workplaces in Cypriot public universities in order to better understand academic development in CoPs. This theme is further discussed in the following chapter.
Chapter 3

Higher Education: the key changes in academic practices

3.1. Researching in the Cypriot context (the Republic of Cyprus)

National education policy of Cyprus and institutional context

It is important to analyse the national education policy of Cyprus, along with a number of issues related to the institutional context, in order to better understand academic career development in public HEIs. The Cypriot public HE is relatively young (around twenty five years), but the turning point in its development includes the accession of the Republic of Cyprus to the EU in 2004, which coincided with a number of governmental initiatives, including the strategy of making Cyprus a European hub for HE research. Once Cyprus has been acknowledged as a signatory country of the Bologna process (Crosier and Parveva 2013), the HE modernisation agenda has become an overarching policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture (Education for All, National Review Report: Cyprus 2015; Higher Education in Cyprus 2012). However, the apparent lack of research on the impact of power and control on academic career development in Cypriot public HE exists.

At present Cypriot public HE is provided at university level by three public and five private universities (www.highereducation.ac.cy/en). In recent years, there has been a relatively steady growth of public universities in the country, in contrast to the private ones. However, the initial establishment and operation of public universities significantly contributed to the creation of indigenous academic culture and expertise in the country (Panagiotidis and Stavrinidis 2012). Even though public universities in Cyprus are established by law and financed mostly by the government (e.g. tuition fees for EU undergraduate students) (Education for All, National Review Report: Cyprus
2015), they have autonomous status (Higher Education in Cyprus 2012). There is no external body that is assessing the quality of research outputs for public universities compared to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) in England, Wales and Scotland (although Lord Stern’s review of the current REF arrangements which is due to be delivered in the summer of 2016, raises questions about whether REF in its current guise will exist in the future).

In Cyprus, public universities’ governing body is a state appointed governing board, which assumes the role and responsibilities of the university Council and the Senate and is responsible for policy formulation, management and financial issues. Consequently, Cypriot public universities used to develop their own internal and external assessment and QA systems for research. One of the roles of the internal QA research policy was to address continuous improvement of internal research and its supportive administrative infrastructure as well as to strengthen universities’ self-awareness regarding their faculty scientific and education provision (Keravnou-Papailiou 2013). Even though there were requirements to carry out the external assessment at programme and at university level, this was not performed adequately and it was not even obligatory. That is why, at the time of working on this research study, the Education Committee of the Cyprus Parliament have continually debated the necessity for a stronger regulatory framework through the ‘Cyprus Agency of QA and Accreditation in education’ (CYAQAAE). Having acknowledged the existing controversies regarding the formal education standards, the government has tried to reinforce the QA mechanisms in Cypriot HE, closing the gap between their regulatory design and the evaluation of outcomes (Education for All, National Review Report: Cyprus 2015).

With the establishment of the unified CYAQAAE for all HEIs (public and private), which was approved by the Parliament of the Republic of Cyprus in July 2015 and started operations in the Autumn 2015, the Agency is now responsible for accreditation matters and for the evaluation of HEIs by requiring them to submit a self-evaluation of research every 2-3 years (EHEA Ministerial Conference 2015). In this framework, it is anticipated that developments of new mechanisms for QA and the implementation of the required measures which will be handled through a close relationship between public universities and the government, are on the way. However, the extent to which it has influenced academics and HEIs is not yet evaluated since it is still not clear when
the new QA mechanism will start fully operating in practice (Education and Training Monitor 2015; EHEA Ministerial Conference 2015).

**Academic career progression path within Cypriot public HEIs**

Cypriot public HE is a highly competitive job market. Public universities are striving for academic excellence and therefore, incentives to choose the best candidates are very strong and strictly associated with the value-added assessment of candidates’ research portfolios (Panagiotidis and Stavrinidis 2012). It is important to note that there is a very complicated system of hiring and promoting academics in Cypriot public universities. Even though there is an emphasis on research; teaching and administrative tasks also play a role for career progression within an institution. Applying for promotion is the normal way to climb the career ladder (Assistant Professor, and tenure-posts - Associate Professor and Full Professor - academic titles are in accordance with the American system). Promotions are assessed and granted by an internal evaluation committee, including external and internal referees (the names are endorsed by the School and the Senate of the university) as well as by an external independent committee (the names are known only to the Chair of the internal evaluation committee).

It is common across all public universities to require evidence of a PhD degree and evidence of university teaching and research in order to obtain a lectureship. After a Lecturer has completed three years of service at the university, the procedure for evaluation is activated. In case of continuation of service without upgrading to the rank of Assistant Professor, another evaluation is performed after three years. In the case of a second failure to be upgraded, employment is terminated. Application dossiers for the rank of Assistant Professor should include original publications in international journals of established reputation or other publications of acknowledged merit, promising an important contribution to science.

After seven years of university work, the procedure for evaluation is activated, resulting either in continuation (or not) of employment or upgrading (or not) to the rank of Associate Professor. In the case of a second failure, the Assistant Professor is required to withdraw from the Faculty. Requirements for appointment include (1) publications
(articles in well-known international scientific journals or books of recognised publishing companies, substantiating a remarkable autonomous research work), (2) ability of instructing and promoting research (supervision of postgraduate students, instruction or significant contribution to research programmes or ensuring of financing research activities) and (3) indications of international contribution to a certain research field (research reports, invitations for scientific lectures, assignment of the evaluation of articles, research reports or doctoral thesis, participation in committees for the publication of scientific journals or participation in the organisation of seminars, contribution to teaching and administrative work of the university). Finally, after the Associate Professor has completed four years of service at university, he/she may ask for upgrading to the rank of Professor. In case of failure, a second chance is given after four years (with no possibility of employment termination).

Examining the context of Cypriot public HE, provides a basis for critical reflection on the bureaucratic practices that underpin career advancement of academics situated within the national and institutional context. At the time of conducting this research and writing up the thesis (2012-2015), the Republic of Cyprus has been going through the most severe economic crisis throughout its history that has caused long-term socio-economic consequences (Zenios 2013). This has led to long discussions between the Cypriot government and the TROIKA (European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund) for necessary monetary measures involving reduced spending in public institutions, including HE. For this reason, it has become more difficult to get a permanent position in Cypriot public HE because there are less permanent academic jobs due to cuts in HEI funding, and consequently what has happened is a growth in temporary academic contracts. Thus, it can be argued that it is important to better understand the lived realities of academics’ participatory practices with a particular concern to social learning processes in their CoPs. This is important because in so doing it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of how they perceive their career development in light of ongoing amendments in the external assessment framework which used to be fragmented in Cyprus.

As outlined in the first chapter, to date there has been very little research that has looked at academic career, academic CoPs and workplace learning of academics in the framework of Situated Learning Theory (Lave and Wenger 1991) in the Cypriot
context. That is why, most of the studies that have been addressed and analysed in this literature review are non-Cypriot based and mainly come from English-speaking countries such as UK, Australia and South Africa. However, it is worth noting that the considered academic and policy literature is appropriate for comparison with the Cypriot HE reality. This is because over the past decade the Cypriot academic world has been exposed to the striking changes facilitated by both globalisation and internationalisation (De Wit 2011), thus it is experiencing similar reorganisation of institutional structures and the external control in HE (James 2007: 140) compared to other European and non-European countries (Persianis 2000). The following section will commence with the discussion and analysis of the debates pertinent to the major fast-paced changes occurring in the European and non-European HE context.

3.2. Changes in the nature of higher education

As outlined in the previous chapter, there is much debate about the changing nature of academic work in contemporary HE (Teelken 2012). The main thrust of the argument presented in the literature is that academics when entering HEIs during the last decade experienced a completely different system from those who joined HE forty years ago, in terms of job roles and career progression (Deem 2006; Blaxter et al. 1998; Henkel 1997).

There is a fast-growing body of literature of contextual variables that describes the professional development of academics, including a wide analysis of complex external factors (James 2007; Duberley et al. 2006; Huisman et al. 2002). In examining these studies it is evident that performance excellence on its own is a poor predictor of a successful academic career nowadays. Indeed, there has been a fundamental recognition of external market constraints that determine the academic work agenda (Musselin 2005) in line with a number of performance indicators such as efficiency and effectiveness (Teelken 2012; Beckmann and Cooper 2004; Deem 1998). This reflects a general tendency of HEIs to become more cost-effective (Davies and Thomas 2002) by meeting the needs of HEI customers (Blackmore 2009) which significantly intensifies academic work (Kolsaker 2008).
As a consequence of budget reductions, academics have become more dependent on government grants and external funding (Teelken 2012; Harley 2003; Davies and Thomas 2002). These measures result in the transformed perception of knowledge as having an exchange value in terms of acquired funding to support further research (Harley and Lee 1997). Given that resource provision is one of the bottom-line necessities for institutions’ survival nowadays, HE has turned out to be associated with the ‘commodity’ that is ‘produced, packaged, sold, traded, outsourced, franchised and consumed’ (Roberts and Peters 2008: 3). An increased number of executive positions in HE, those who spend a great deal of time managing funding (Hackett 1990), explains ‘commodification’ of academic labour (Harley and Lee 1997; De Groot 1997) which is routinely evaluated based on financial benefits and competitiveness (Bansel 2011; Valsan and Sproule 2008).

Moreover, a series of studies evidenced the striking transition from elite to mass HE that raised ambiguous expectations regarding academic roles (Kyvik 2013; Deem 2006). Indeed, greater teaching loads involving bigger and diverse groups (Gelade 2007; Mcwilliam 2004) require extra training for academics at the expense of other duties. As a result, it is common to question academic roles which have become ‘handicapped’ (Dominelli and Hoogvelt 1996: 210) due to the existing restrictive measures, despite any attempts of policymakers to alleviate financing constraints (Bansel 2011). However, practically when it comes to setting strategies in HEIs, the main emphasis is likely to be placed on high levels of achievement in line with ‘commercial logic’ (Bleiklie and Kogan 2007: 488) that makes academics be transformed into ‘average service workers’ (Valsan and Sproule 2008: 952). For example, Kyvik (2013) acknowledged significant changes in academic performance demands in Norwegian research universities and attributed these changes to enhanced requirements towards better quality and relevance of research to societal expectations. Consequently, a highly managerial view of HE has transformed internal policies and practices of HEIs and these have significantly influenced academics’ identities and their development (James 2007).

Although much of the research in the field of HE is well presented, there is still some reticence among researchers on the impact of the alleged transformation of HE system on academic careers. This raises the importance of further researching into how
academics perceive complex and conflicting practices they are exposed to, as they participate in CoPs.

3.2.1. The insights into the impacts of ‘new managerialism’ on academic work

The influx of managerial practices into HE has become incorporated within the overall reforms in the market that commenced a few decades ago, known as New Public Management (NPM) or ‘new managerialism’ (Beckmann and Cooper 2004). The new management doctrine is concerned with the enhanced processes of accountability, the ‘disproportionate growth’ of administrative tasks (Hackett 1990: 247), and increased control over efficiency, effectiveness and productivity (Beckmann and Cooper 2004; Davies and Thomas 2002). The introduction of an evaluation framework with the established performance indicators creates a major influence on the way HEIs are managed nowadays (Nixon 2003).

On the one hand, the underlying principle of performance appraisal, which is associated with the process of monitoring the transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness of academic outputs (Deem 1998) can be viewed as a useful tool for reviewing the performance of academics over a period of time. For instance, the externally imposed Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) (Leathwood and Read 2013; Harley 2003) as a quality control system of research outputs helped to enhance ‘the visibility of academic performance; to measure, compare and rank academics’ (Davies and Thomas 2002: 183). Similarly, the REF is carried out by the funding bodies in England, Wales and Scotland (since 2014) in order to establish the required criteria for comparison of the research outcomes (Watson 2011). On the other hand, despite the fact that these assessment methods prioritise the quality of research (Becher and Trowler 2001), academics evidenced the existing constraints introduced by such rankings (Harley 2003) due to a growing institutional intervention into their working agenda (Lord Stern’s review of the current REF arrangements).

It is argued therefore, that academics are forced to comply with the regulations and demands of performativity standards and research audit in order to stay employed (Leathwood and Read 2013). That is why academics prefer to produce ordinary ‘safe’
research at the expense of speculative or contentious one (Åkerlind and Kayrooz 2003: 327) in order to meet the preset requirements and improve chances for success in the workplace (Teelken 2012). Teelken (2012) mentioned the existence of sanctions academics encounter in case they have limited number of publications or submit their papers in low-impact journals, but did not expand on this matter. These restrictions are subject to constantly changing institutionalised performance measures in HEIs which are ‘linked to a ranking system designed for funding purposes’ (Harley and Lee 1997: 1429), through which academic work is assessed and compared. In this respect, there are arguments for inadequacy of such assessment mechanisms. For example, Holroyd (2000: 42) indicated inappropriateness of assessment procedures in HE since most of these are likely to be ‘allied to an institutional culture which prioritizes efficiency above fairness’. He questioned the utility of performance indicators since academics lack sufficient time required for collaboration with colleagues and for systematic inquiries into their own practice, due to diverse and intensive work activities.

There are further critical arguments against the conflicting outcomes of a manageable accountability approach applied to teaching and learning in HE (Tummons 2014). Tummons (2014) proposes to reconcile the existing QA processes, arguing that what people learn and teach cannot be straightforwardly assessed since the outcomes are difficult to be quantified. Based on the analysis of the current state of HE, he suggests to be focused on those tangible categories of a ‘learning architecture’ (Wenger 1998) that can be measured, and avoid those which are intangible and complex (Tummons 2014: 137).

Even though the record of academic outcomes which count for promotion and tenure decisions (Coaldrake and Stedman 1999) is highly valued, a more nuanced observation on how this appraisal technique affects academic work (Harley and Lee 1997) in terms of standardisation of research (Roberts 2007) is required. For example, the expected publication record in high-impact (Henkel 1997) or top journals (Tourish 2011) is perceived to be intimidating by academics (Murray and Cunningham 2011). Moreover, an increased number of citations does not necessarily mean that academics’ research is automatically publicly recognised (Lodge 2008). This is because in various research fields citations are calculated and perceived differently that misleads comparisons across disciplines (Lodge 2008).
From the evidence so far, it is clear that the issue of performance assessment of academics is a disputed subject in HE. In other words, any attempt to promote performativity in HE increases academics’ involvement in ‘secondary activities’ such as administrative tasks and assessments at the expense of teaching and research (Teelken 2012). Moreover, this may cause cognitive dissonance due to ambivalent attitudes towards their work outcomes, when performing what is required instead of doing their work ‘as a source of self-expression and pleasure’ (Bansel 2011: 548). As a result, the literature is replete with the debates on the transformation of academic activities that force academics to become more ‘wage-earner professionals’ (Musselin 2005: 148), directed by pre-specified outcomes.

Based on the research undertaken by Teelken (2012) on the impact of managerial measures on academics, 48 interviews with staff members in ten Universities (UK, Netherlands, Sweden) were conducted. The results show that measurable performance standards in terms of publications in high-quality research outlets, externally funded research grants and student ratings, severely influence academic work. Key findings of the study reported academics’ attitudes towards increased obligations in HE (growing administrative duties, enhanced competition for research funding and heavier workload):

- ‘Symbolic compliance’ explains the critical acceptance of tension between bureaucratic control and the research with the main emphasis on the output but not on the context. Moreover, the quality of teaching is deteriorating with the focus on the evaluation of courses and lecturers by students who are more aware ‘of their rights as customers’ (Davies and Thomas 2002: 191). This makes lecturers be ‘frightened of evaluations’ (Teelken 2012: 285-286).

- ‘Professional pragmatism’ explains that managerialist approach in HE is perceived to be influential but taken for granted by academics. Respondents conform to the requirements of the system by pursuing research in the direction where they can get funding in order to have chances to prosper.

- ‘Formal instrumentality’ explains that academics rely on ‘formal arrangements and instruments (such as the accreditation scheme or QA instruments) without a critical perspective’. A few respondents perceived the evaluation of courses as beneficial and helpful in improving the quality of teaching (Teelken 2012: 278).
The findings of Teelken (2012) support the general views on negative influences of measurable standards of performance through which managerialist ideology was introduced in HE (Kolsaker 2008). Even though the critical importance of provided service quality (Worthington and Hodgson 2005) is considered to be a prerogative of academic work, the main focus seems to be on the economic benefits rather than on teaching and research (Teelken 2012). According to Henkel (1997), such influences are likely to affect the choice of research topics and trustful relationships between academics and HEIs (Bleiklie and Kogan 2007). In fact, the above measures have triggered academics’ feelings of a lost exclusiveness (Henkel 1997) that impedes their professional commitment to communities (Davies and Thomas 2002). Consequently, another problem that is mainly related to new-managerialist culture exposed in HEIs is a high level of stress, demotivation and deterioration of academics’ well-being (Beckmann and Cooper 2004; Teelken 2012) due to a drop in perceived job security (Winefield 2002 cited in Gelade 1997: 22).

As a result, the original belief that academics have secured tenure, relatively liberal and equal allocation of working time, limited administrative duties, common salary arrangements, and the interdependence of teaching and research (Henkel 1997) - these expectations do not constitute reality nowadays. In conceptualising the main influences of managerialist practices, Bleiklie and Kogan (2007: 479) highlighted the following: (1) centralised authorities determine the institutional objectives and methods of working via the required accreditation, QA and public funding; (2) managerial infrastructure concerned with the prestige of HEIs; (3) attempts of councils and trustees to integrate business vision into academic establishments and (4) deans acting as chief executive officers in HEIs, focusing on the results. Thus, these measures increasingly transform HEIs into business entities that may end up being dysfunctional, simply because such methods are against the nature of the faculty work life.

Despite a number of studies that described negative consequences of managerialist paradigm in HE context, it is important to acknowledge contradicting views on this matter. Engwall (2008) for example, presented an optimistic view declaring that despite the fact that universities adopt management methods and depend on markets for funding, grants and students, this reality does not make them be fully associated with corporations. Engwall (2008: 9) argued against any misleading strict comparison
between universities as ‘cathedrals of learning’ and corporations as ‘cathedrals of earning’. This is because of the origins and the historically developed traditions within universities which are focused on knowledge diffusion.

A number of authors (Teelken 2012; Kolsaker 2008) also indicated the positive impact of an adequate proportion of managerialism on academic work in terms of transparency and accountability. Kolsaker’s research (2008: 522) on over 7000 academics in UK institutions explains that academics accept managerialism ‘as a facilitator of enhanced performance, professionalism and status’. In other words, Kolsaker argues with those researchers who associate managerialism with ‘deprofessionalisation’ (2008: 520). Yet another argument is based on the review of UK institutional case studies that shows positive influences of managerial structures on the quality of decision-making in institutions (Shattock 1999: 281). It is also claimed that application of managerialist practices can be considered as an attempt to reduce gender-based gap due to accepted legitimacy and equity (Morley 2005). However, despite the existing controversies in the literature, increased managerial control over academics (Enders and Musselin 2008) has made academic life more complex (Clegg 2009; Blaxter et al. 1998) and affected their autonomy when performing academic activities (Musselin 2005). The next section will present insights into the notion of academic freedom.

3.3. Growth of illusion regarding academic freedom

To further the analysis of concurrent changes in HE and subsequent influences on academic work, it is important to critically explore the notion of academic freedom that has been widely discussed in the literature (Sadler 2011; Karran 2009a; Fossey and Wood 2004; Åkerlind and Kayrooz 2003). A major difficulty in addressing this concept is lack of agreement regarding its meaning, which is differently evaluated by emphasising either its negative or positive side (Sadler 2011; Åkerlind and Kayrooz 2003).

Along with the argument of Karran (2009a), I accept that academic freedom should be considered essential for academic development. This is because academic freedom is a
fundamental characteristic of HEIs’ functioning (Karran 2009b: 194), since ‘the right to education, teaching and research can only be fully enjoyed in an atmosphere of academic freedom’ (UNESCO 1998: 26). In this context, academics are provided with important opportunities to follow their research agenda in pursuing new ideas to the public good, in helping their institutions to prosper. That is why academics should raise awareness regarding their rights in order to be encouraged to protect them, namely:

“to challenge existing knowledge and create new ideas, [...] to undertake research and discuss new ideas and problems of their disciplines, and express their conclusions, through both publication and in the teaching of students, without interference from political or ecclesiastical authorities, or from the administrative officials of their institution, unless their methods are found by qualified bodies within their own discipline to be clearly incompetent or contrary to professional ethics” (Karran 2009b: 191).

Whilst admitting the above, the detailed recommendations (UNESCO 1998) regarding the importance of academic freedom, collegiality and tenure (Karran 2009b) are not accepted in a number of European countries. This happens because of a rapidly changing working climate in HEIs (Karran 2009b) coupled with constant scrutiny of performance, high uncertainty and insecurity (Archer 2008). For example, despite the rhetoric regarding freedom of speech in HE (Åkerlind and Kayrooz 2003), there is an increasing dominance of institutions in formulating policies regarding assessment (Sadler 2011).

Although it is held that academics protect their freedom when designing assessment plans, institutions control student assessment in order to attract and retain students (Sadler 2011). In other words, students’ expectations and their judgment of the received facilities (Valsan and Sproule 2008) have become critical, resulting either in informal complaints or even filing these in the court (Davies and Thomas 2002). Thus, even though academic freedom is considered as a basic condition of academic knowledge development (Åkerlind and Kayrooz 2003), certain restrictions towards academics are imposed by institutional policies (Musselin 2005; Henkel 1997). This is primarily because of the existing performance management system that gives HEIs a legitimate basis for control over resources and outcomes.
Despite the existing negative perspective on academic freedom due to its role in protection of academic integrity from any intervention (Åkerlind and Kayrooz 2003), performative systems (Musselin 2005) significantly restrict academic autonomy. For example, some quantifiable outcomes (e.g. publishing or securing research funding) may gauge the importance of one’s work and his/her career progression (Engwall 2008). The existing gap between research expectations of staff and availability of resources to support their aspirations within institutions (Caudrake and Stedman 1999) make them comply with the demands of the prospective funding bodies (Mcwilliam 2004). This dependence is transferred to academics in the form of obliged research contributions towards the achievement of state-imposed initiatives and goals that shape their working priorities and career prospects (Hackett 1990). This explains why academic research agenda and academic work ‘rely less on individual autonomy than before’ (Musselin 2005: 136).

Based on evidence that universities go against the fundamental principles of Magna Charta Universitatum (Nyborg 2014) by ignoring the freedom of choice in research and training, it can be argued that academic freedom has become increasingly deteriorated. As a result, it is questionable whether academics attempt to put forward:

   “new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions”


Moreover, changes in academic employment relations (Leslie 1998) are especially dramatic with respect to a less observable but meaningful aspect of academic life, which is academic freedom. Indeed, there is a certain tension between academic freedom and historically developed principle of tenure (Nybom 2008) as the right of academics to continue employment, except if terminated on an adequate cause (Fossey and Wood 2004) (this theme will be discussed in the following section).

All these aforementioned interventions such as restricted professional autonomy (Musselin 2005), ‘performance related and discretionary rewards’ (De Groot 1997: 138), accountability (Kolsaker 2008; Davies and Thomas 2002) and measurable standards of performance (Teelken 2012) have resulted in the transition of traditional HE into a business platform of operations. As a result, due to increased direct power of
universities and the state (Kolsaker 2008) over academics, more insights should be gained into their career development.

3.4. Academic career

Given that career is perceived to be a continuous lifelong process, involving ‘sequences of persons’ work experiences’ (Arthur et al. 1989: 8), the analysis of career development is fundamental to understanding the relationship between organisations and individuals in terms of mutually agreed expectations. Traditionally, career refers to ‘a continuous and upward trajectory of full-time employment, the product of organizational or occupational strategies’ (Brown 1982 cited in Taylor 2004: 36), or ‘the combination and sequence of roles played by a person during the course of a lifetime’ (Super 1980: 282). Although the above understanding is widely accepted, no insights into the complexity of career paths from a more dynamic standpoint are given.

Instead, Arnold and Jackson (1997) argued that in reality people are unlikely to pursue career which offers only upward progression. Following the view of Arnold and Jackson (1997), it can be argued that the definitions of career by Brown (1982) and Super (1980) mentioned above over-simplified the meaning of the term. The main shortcoming of their arguments (Brown 1982; Super 1980) in defining career, is their reliance on relatively stable labour conditions without any consideration of rapid changes in employment relations.

In contrast, the meaning of career should be grasped by considering individuals’ unique personal life history, their attitudes and beliefs (Arnold and Jackson 1997). In this sense, the definition of career provided by Zabusky and Barley (1996) is much closer to the theoretical framework and epistemological perspective applied in the current research. They brought a critical voice to the meaning of career by arguing that it should be perceived in line with individuals’ achievement, ‘in terms of increments of skill and position in a network of practitioners’ (Zabusky and Barley 1996: 197 cited in Duberley et al. 2006: 1132).
In order to get a better picture of the conditions underpinning academic careers, attention should be directed to the changes in the system of academic operations (Deem 2006). An academic career has become a risk-career (Castelló and Iñesta 2012), which is no longer straightforward due to introduced managerial measures (Teelken 2012) (discussed in the preceding sections) that have resulted in changing personal career directions (Davies and Thomas 2002; Leslie 1998; Henkel 1997). More academics have become involved in different ‘practice- and policy-orientated activities’ of public, private and voluntary sectors (Lea and Stierer 2009: 426). Indeed, academics cross boundaries within and beyond HEIs and position themselves differently from those academics already established in their fields (Castelló and Iñesta 2012; James 2007).

Whilst accepting the argument by Duberley et al. (2006: 1132) about the increased decline of a stable academic career, the main reasons for this change are beyond ‘family and personal circumstances’. What has changed is a rapid decline in tenure-track appointments (Valsan and Sproule 2008). Coupled with the economic downturn, HEIs decide on more varied and flexible employment terms (Henkel 1997), including alternative academic positions (administrative positions related to research, contract teaching) (Castelló et al. 2015), temporary contracts (Davies and Thomas 2002) and adjunct faculty (Wolfinger et al. 2009). The notion of tenure which is originally associated with the freedom to work on any research problems (Henderson 2008), including ‘risk-taking research’ (Varma 2001: 199), has become expensive for institutions. As a result, it ceased to be the norm of an academic life and ‘an integral part of the way universities function’ (McPherson and Winston 1983: 182).

A growing number of short-term contracts in HE have caused a serious concern among researchers (Leathwood and Read 2013; Dany et al. 2011; Duberley et al. 2006). For example, Huisman et al. (2002) in their comparative study of academics in Western Europe showed the reasons for the loss of interest of young researchers in pursuing an academic career which is surrounded by uncertainty. They explained these changes by restricted opportunities to get a permanent job in HEIs and reduced remuneration in comparison to the past. It is very common for universities to employ temporary staff compared to tenured one (Huisman et al. 2002), that is directly related to the existing budgetary cuts that affect HE development and challenge academic careers (Valsan and Sproule 2008). As a result, early-career academics face more difficulties to equally
access career opportunities due to growing competition for tenure posts (Austin and Rice 1998) and replace their colleagues after their retirement (Becher and Trowler 2001). As a response to enrollment shifts (Davies and Thomas 2002) the average time required to get a permanent post in HE is longer than before. Consequently, limited initial opportunities for achieving continuous employment (Enders and Kaulisch 2006) characterise the current HE system.

However, increased reliance on temporary faculty is likely to damage the long-term relationship between the faculty and students as argued by Varma (2001) in her study of engineering tenure track. This is because without being placed within the context of the community and being active participants in shared activities, academics’ commitment to institutions deteriorates that negatively affects their performance (Mcwilliam 2004). As a result, academics look outside their institutions in order to find new and better opportunities (Henkel 1997). Indeed, this enables academics to establish future-oriented networking opportunities across boundaries of their departmental communities as a basis for a direct access to resources (Baruch and Hall 2004). Even though Blaxter et al. (1998) notably emphasised that managing and networking are those academic roles which should become dominant at later career stages, more recent studies (Van den Brink and Benschop 2014; Forret and Dougherty 2004) reported that networking is perceived to be the best practical tool for initial career development.

Moreover, evidence about international staff mobility and interdisciplinary collaboration in HE (Enders and Kaulisch 2006), shows that academic career is becoming increasingly ‘boundaryless’ (Arthur and Rousseau 1996). Musselin (2007) further argued that the notion of ‘boundaryless’ career requires from academics to undertake their own responsibility for their career development, thus retaining substantial degree of self-regulation and independence (Staniforth and Harland 2006). However, other studies (Musselin 2005) showed that academics experience increased external pressure and control regarding their research outputs that make them be dependent on their institutions. Those academics who are only engaged with teaching practices, feel discouraged and depressed working in HE since only a combination of ‘quantity of publications and the size of research grants’ prevails (Davies and Thomas 2002: 191).
Evidence of power inequality between academics, institutions and the state as well as the external control and manipulation over academic work (Kolsaker 2008) can be translated into pressure that academics encounter in workplaces. This resulted in less tight contractual ties between academics and institutions, and academics’ restricted participation in their communities (Viskovic 2005). Despite a wide range of studies on academics’ development, there is a need to gain deeper insights into situated workplace learning experiences of academics (Lave and Wenger 1991) since career is a certain output of individuals and workplace interaction (Schein 1975).

3.5. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the literature on CoPs, HE and academic careers as well as drawing on the critique of the existing approaches, this research study will explore the impact of participatory practices of academics on their career development. Having acknowledged the significant contributions of the past studies, this research is primarily concerned with addressing the research gap and disagreements between authors. The research questions of the current study that are drawn from the literature review and specify my research concerns are briefly discussed below.

The first research question aims to examine the barriers to workplace learning and their impact on the forms of participation of academics within and beyond CoPs. The argument is guided by contradicting views on academic workplaces as fragmented and competitive (Smith and Rust 2011) in contrast to traditionally enshrined mutual practices (Churchman and Stehlik 2007). As a result, a more detailed analysis of workplace learning practices of academics in CoPs is required.

The second research question aims to explore whether community relations of academics, including ‘lateral’ moves across boundaries of their communities and multiple membership, influence their career development. The argument is developed based on the findings of how academics differently perceive the influences of new-managerialist ideology in HE (Teelken 2012; Kolsaker 2008). This study attempts therefore, to gain deeper insights into the powerful role of peripheral participation in
CoPs that might restrict the development of academics. Wenger’s (1998: 77) assertion for perceiving competition and conflicts as a form of participation that may lead to greater commitment than ‘passive conformity’, was questioned in this research. Evidence presented in the literature on academic CoPs is ambiguous in this respect.

Moreover, the study questions the extent to which new members of academic departments in the process of their LPP become the key players for the transformation of CoPs. In accordance with the existing critical views on LPP (Fuller et al. 2005), including evidence about academic CoPs (Warhurst 2008; Jawitz 2007; Yandell and Turvey 2007; Viskovic 2005), the current research challenges Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theorisation of this process. In light of the existing transformations in HE, including lesser opportunities of tenure-track appointments, more research is needed in examining academics’ ‘lateral’ moves between academic CoPs at different stages of their careers. It is important to understand whether and why the LPP of newcomers in academic workplaces is an entirely problematic practice (Jawitz 2007).

The final research question addresses the impacts of ‘new managerialism’ in Cypriot public HE on academics’ career development. To date there has been very little research that has looked at academic careers in Cypriot HE. That is why it is extremely important to gain insights into the perceived transformations within Cypriot public HEIs and their impact on academics’ participatory practices.

The next chapter will critically discuss the chosen methodological approach of the current study. This also includes the analysis of the research design, sampling strategies, methods of data collection as well as ethical considerations.
Chapter 4

Methodology

4.1. Introduction

As explained in preceding chapters (Two and Three), despite the existing concerns on academic careers (McAlpine 2012; Dany et al. 2011; Wolfinger et al. 2009; Duberley et al. 2006) and academic CoPs (Smith and Rust 2011; Jawitz 2007; Churchman and Stehlik 2007; Viskovic 2005), there is still lack of a comprehensive study of these issues in the Cypriot context. Given the importance of modernising Cypriot public HE (Education for All, National Review Report: Cyprus 2015; EHEA Ministerial Conference 2015), the research agenda of this study was to gain insights into academics’ participatory practices within academic workplaces and academic career development. The following five research questions emerged:

1. To examine whether the barriers to workplace learning have an impact on the forms of participation of academics within and beyond CoPs.
2. To analyse the extent to which community relations influence career development of academics:
   a. To explore whether *power inequalities* between academics impact upon their workplace learning within CoPs.
   b. To review the impact of *access* to resources within academic CoPs on academic career development.
3. To determine the extent to which new members of academic departments in the process of their ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ become the key players for the transformation of CoPs.
4. To determine the impacts of ‘new managerialism’ in Cypriot public universities on career development of academics.
5. To explain the insights that can be gained into academic careers (in the face of changes in public universities) and how this might be further supported.
This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section is the introduction which provides an outline of the chapter. This is followed by the discussion and justification of the research strategy of the study, including both the philosophical and methodological approaches that underpin the research design. The third section includes the justification of the chosen research method by thoughtfully comparing it with the alternative methods that did not fit the needs of the research. This section encompasses the analysis of internal and external validity of the study. This is followed by the discussion about the pilot study by considering the development of the research instrument. It gives an overview of the participants’ profile, the sample framework and its description as well as the location where the research took place. It fully describes the whole process of how data were generated during the main fieldwork. It also includes the description of the process of data analysis as well as the adopted coding system. The fourth section presents ethical considerations with a critical reflection on the researcher’s role. The final section is the conclusion of this chapter.

4.2. Research strategy of the study

4.2.1. Ontological and epistemological approach

The researcher’s standpoint in relation to the current study

Being an academic myself (working for a private University, Cyprus) and having a teaching background in social psychology, I have always been concerned about the learning processes that are embedded in academic workplaces and how these affect academics’ career development. My involvement in preparing and conducting a range of professional training programs in relation to different skills development, allowed me to reflect on the existing shortcomings of workplace learning activities.

Moreover, my interest in the sociology of work and academic careers, made me search for an opportunity to study academics’ learning practices in a more deliberate way by considering the existing pitfalls in the field. Thus, my knowledge of the world and my
personal and professional experiences in it, have shaped my philosophical and methodological choices applied in this research (Crotty 1998).

According to the main assumption of the current study, the lived experiences of academics are developed in social settings and thus, are ‘meaningful properties of the social reality’ (Mason 2009: 63). However, knowledge about this reality is situated in practice and developed differently by academics. This is because their subjective views and interpretations of the reality are determined by the matter of importance and created through socially negotiated meanings, depending on the context and time (Creswell 2003). In other words, it can be argued that the social setting cannot be fully understood independently from the participants. This argument aligned my position with subjectivist ontology, meaning that my role was to gain richer insights into academics’ experiences by exploring the setting in which they participated and their perception of it (Ratner 2008).

Further considerations are about the epistemological stance as a lens of how social phenomena are known to the researcher (Mason 2009; Creswell 2003). The divergence of ontological views of the reality makes the nature of knowledge and the way it is acquired to be understood either from positivistic or phenomenological positions (Bryman 2008). As explored in preceding chapters Lave and Wenger’s CoP (1991) is one of the key conceptual terms of this research in considering the nature of academics’ learning practices. That is why I argue for the necessity of gaining a deeper understanding of academics’ workplace learning practices that cannot be understood in isolation from the context in which they work (Creswell 2003; Lincoln and Guba 1985), carry out particular roles and develop the meaning of their career paths. In other words, unless we consider the dominant role of academics in constructing their experiences (Lincoln and Guba 1985), our understanding of their subjective world will be misleading. Thus, the rationale of this study was to explore academics’ learning experiences as lived stories that aligned this research with the epistemological stance which was social constructivism (Creswell 2003; Aronsson 1997).

In recognising the existence of the alternative philosophical paradigm, positivistic – ‘empirical-analytic’ approach (Mingers 2001: 242) was considered as inappropriate for this study. This is because the main thrust of the current research was to gain insights
into the social reality, which is not stable (contradicting the philosophy of positivism (Denzin and Lincoln 2008)), but can be explored through the analysis of the constructed meanings and experiences of individuals (Mingers 2001). This rationale is supported by the interpretative paradigm that allowed me to listen to academics’ voices on their practices and meanings (Bryman 2008) which were formed in their interactions with others (Creswell 2003). The next section explains the methodological approach of this study.

4.2.2. Methodological approach

The rationale for choosing the qualitative approach to acquire the knowledge

As discussed in the preceding section, the focus of this study was to gain a broader and deeper understanding of academics’ contextual knowledge about the studied phenomena (Mason 2009). As such, it was important to capture how academics viewed their daily practices in terms of the processes in their own unique way (Bryman 2008), but not as passive facts. In so doing, the experiences of academics were explored in order to develop a more explicit picture about their learning practices and their careers, by moving into a deeper understanding (Creswell 2003) of what happened (Mingers 2001) in ‘context-specific settings’ (Golafshani 2003: 600). Thus, the logic for choosing the qualitative approach was primarily justified by the nature of the knowledge which is fundamentally qualitative (Grix 2002).

Moreover, there are previous studies on academic CoPs that adopted a similar approach (Jiang et al. 2010; Viskovic 2005). Viskovic (2005) for example, explored the context of a community of teaching practice through the stories expressed by the participants. In this way, her insights into the situated learning of teachers revealed in-depth understanding of meanings that teachers brought to the complex social nature of their workplace setting. In contrast, quantitative approach which provides ‘a very superficial analysis’ of the social situation (Mingers 2001: 255) does not help to gain rich insights into the studied phenomena. Quantitative approach bears statistical comparisons and measurement of data and it is relevant to big sample groups or when the researcher manipulates the phenomenon of interest (Mingers 2001).
Since the current study aimed to explore a continuum of academics’ unique experiences (Mason 2009) as described in their own stories (Creswell 2003), quantitative approach could limit our understanding of a very complex nature of social phenomena and restrict interpretations of academics’ narratives (Mingers 2001). Thus, inductive theoretical contributions of the findings were essential to this study, rather than testing the existing theory (Bryman 2008). However, due to the existing critique towards qualitative research paradigm (Mason 2009; Bryman 2008; Easton et al. 2000), the chosen approach was applied with a critical eye, and the main considerations are presented below.

Unlike the quantitative research, the major criticism of qualitative studies is concerned with the validity of the ‘subjective nature’ of generated data (Easton et al. 2000: 703). This raised a wider issue of reflexivity (Mason 2009) since the whole research process was influenced by the participants’ identities (Arendell 1997) and shaped by a set of researchers’ beliefs (Bryman 2008). For this reason, the findings were protected from any personal prejudices (Forchuk and Roberts 1993), bearing in mind that the qualitative researcher should develop the required level of skills to exhibit self-awareness or self-consciousness (Bryman 2008). In doing this, personal biases at all stages of the research process are likely to be avoided. Moreover, the ethical matters were thoughtfully considered during the whole research process.

However, there is another challenge which is also related to the authenticity of the generated data (Mason 2009; Denzin and Lincoln 2008). Given that the world around us is subjective (Mingers 2001), academics made sense of this world in their own way (Bryman 2008), and thus personal values were brought into the study (Creswell 2003). From the evidence so far it is clear that the rationale of this research was to explore the range of opinions and rich descriptions of situations (Arendell 1997), rather than to identify cause-and-effect relationship (Mason 2009), the right and the wrong. This however, could raise an issue of inconsistency of the generated material, because a stream of independent events was going to be acquired. To overcome this challenge, it was essential to have a fairly clear focus on the research questions, rather than simply ‘wanting to do research on a topic’ (Bryman 2008: 439). Moreover, it was early ensured that the research problem was stated in the context of the existing research literature in order to give a better understanding of what was relevant and important (Bryman 2008).
Additionally, in order to enhance the validity of the qualitative data, the researcher was concerned with the possible context bias regarding the physical setting in which interviews took place. For this reason academics chose the place and the time for the interview in order to ensure that they were not overloaded by their working tasks. Furthermore, the research data were generated from several sources (will be further discussed) in order to verify and analyse any inconsistencies. As part of the considerations on the validity and reliability of the findings, attention was given to the process of recording. Before conducting interviews the digital recorder had been checked (Easton et al. 2000). The quality control test was performed to assure that evidence will be captured with equal clarity that positively influenced the accuracy of the research data (Fernandez and Griffiths 2007).

Having put forward arguments for suitability of qualitative research approach for this study, the problem of its limited power in generalising data to a bigger population in contrast to quantitative study, was considered (Mason 2009). However, it can be argued that the fundamental strength of the qualitative research and the reason why it was applied in this study lies in its capacity to obtain extensive explanatory texts about academics’ practices (Mason 2009; Bryman 2008) and to broaden existing knowledge in the field. The next section explains the rationale for choosing a case study approach.

The rationale for choosing a case study approach to acquire the knowledge

A case study approach was adopted in this research that usually focuses on a particular phenomenon of interest (Rosenberg and Yates 2007) in order to engage with it in a more explicit way. Consequently, the chosen approach helped to gain the deepest level of understanding of academics’ participatory practices within a real-life context (Yin 2009). In this way the social reality which was context-based and embedded in academics’ minds was understood through exploring academics’ stories about their development in HE (Grix 2002).

Moreover, the underlying epistemological assumption of this study (social constructivism) also provided a rationale for using the case study to explore the social setting which depends on one’s practices and experiences (Baxter and Jack 2008). Even though a survey can also reveal the meaning and the nature of the phenomena of
interest, the capacity to understand the breadth and depth of the context in this way is entirely problematic (Yin 2009). Thus, the rationale for adopting a case study research was its power to explore directly the whole complexity of data in a certain unique context (Simons 1996) and to contribute to the existing theory (Yin 2009).

Furthermore, a case study research was successfully applied in previous studies of HE and learning. Hong and O (2009) applied a case study (a tertiary education institution based in Macao) in order to fully explore the contextual problems of learning between various CoPs when facing power inequalities and conflicting situations. Campbell (2009) also generated data on initial learning experiences of new recruits (in police) using the case study (New South Wales) that resulted in deeper understanding of their practices. All the above presented arguments served as a solid basis for justification of the decision to undertake a single (Bryman 2008), instrumental case study in this research in order to focus on the phenomena of interest within a certain setting (Stake 2000) such as Cypriot public universities.

**Further justification for choosing a single case study with three embedded units**

Public tertiary education in Cyprus is currently provided at university level by three public universities (www.highereducation.ac.cy/en). According to the Institutions of Tertiary Education Laws (2014), the institution can be named ‘public’ in the Republic of Cyprus if the Republic is responsible for matters of its administration, operation and maintenance. That is, the Department of Higher and Tertiary Education within the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) applies similar regulatory actions regarding budgets, legal matters and international cooperation towards the three public universities (www.highereducation.ac.cy/en/nomothesia.html). Bearing this in mind, similarities in the way in which the three universities are operated, make them be initially distinct from other educational institutions in Cyprus. For this purpose it was decided to choose a single case study with three embedded units of analysis (Yin 2009) in order to acquire as much complete data of a similar context as possible and thus facilitate in-depth analysis of the studied phenomena. Each embedded unit was significantly important for gaining an understanding of academics’ participatory practices within CoPs and therefore, a balanced sample of participants from the three Universities was obtained.
Although the case study approach supported the methodological assumptions of this research, its heavy criticism is addressed in the literature (Goodwin and Horowitz 2002; Bergen and While 2000; Bassey 1999). However, a closer look at the criteria for judging the quality of the chosen case study shows that it meets the needs of the current research and fits its philosophical assumptions. Even though someone can question the external validity and capacity of this study to generalise the results beyond the evidence of the chosen case, it can be argued that the current study tends to achieve ‘analytical generalization’ rather than ‘statistical’ (Yin 2009: 43) by contrasting the findings to the existing literature in order to ‘situate the new data into preexisting data’ (Baxter and Jack 2008: 555). Furthermore, the number of the embedded units is exhaustive in this research (all public Universities) that invites the reader to explore the world of Cypriot public universities, but not to make assumptions about all Cypriot HEIs (Bassey 1999).

Another criterion for judging the quality of a case study research relates to reliability (Bassey 1999), which means achieving ‘congruence between concepts and observations’ (Bryman 2008: 376) within a single case and also being explicit about the possible biases (Yin 2009). This was achieved in this study by an intensive examination of the chosen case in order to be fully engaged with its core issues, by developing trustful relationships with academics (Lincoln and Guba 1985) and following a designed research plan (Yin 2009). By no means, the chosen methodological approach assisted in generating the required data. However, apart from this, a special attention was paid to the research design as discussed in the next section.

4.3. Research design

4.3.1. Research method

The main intent of this research study was to generate data about academics’ participatory practices by narrating their lived experiences. As a result, the research instrument had to allow academics to freely express their opinion on a particular problem, to describe their practices in depth, including as many details as possible in line with the research questions.
Based on this rationale, the chosen research method was in-depth, semi-structured interview under the umbrella of biographical approach (Roberts 2002). This is because this method is thoroughly contextual that helps to understand individuals’ perceptions and their lived experiences within the social context in which they operate (Bryman 2008; Goodson and Sikes 2001). This can be achieved through the generation of narratives about ‘biographical particulars’, ‘resources and constraints’ individuals experience in the course of their personal and professional lives (Holstein and Gubrium 2000 cited in Chase 2008: 73-74). Thus, the output of qualitative in-depth, semi-structured interviews is the rich data about past events through the lens of the present (Bryman 2008). Consequently, the choice of the research method was justified by its capacity to uncover the complexity of academics’ participatory practices by inviting them to narrate their professional life stories (Roberts 2002) and inquire who they are, what they do and how they interpret their reflections (Wenger 1998).

Non-participant observation of academics in their departmental communities was considered as an additional method of data generation in order to have a direct access to face-to-face interactions between them (Hong and O 2009; Angrosino 2008) as a way of adding more insights and understanding to interview data with the aim to develop richer narrative accounts. However, the application of this method raised questions about the ethical issues embedded in this research such as keeping participants safe from harm (Wood 2006) and protecting their anonymity (Wiles et al. 2008). As such, given the importance of in-depth academics’ stories about their participatory practices as an object of analysis (Riessman 2002), the need for confidentiality caused a certain dilemma for choosing non-participant observation (Bryman 2008).

An exploration of the context in which observation could take place highlighted the power imbalance between me as the researcher and the academics, as well as between each other, raising questions about the extent to which they would be willing to be open and honest (Roberts 2002), and also limiting the possibility of understanding the complexity of academics’ lived experiences (Clandinin and Huber 2010). Additionally, the working hours of the academics who took part in the current research varied considerably and this limited my chances to observe their actual participatory practices. I did not want to pressurise them to take part in the research, thus violating their
voluntary consent (Bush and James 2015) and compromise the credibility of the generated data.

Another reason for rejecting observation as a possible research method was related to the language of everyday communication. Even though English is widely spoken in Cypriot public HE for academic purposes, academics often use their native language (Greek) for informal talk. As such, I would not be able to fully explore the array of meanings they attach to their participatory practices since Greek is not my native language. Having considered the ethical issues of using observation as an alternative method of data collection, the method was rejected since I had to safeguard the privacy of academics and respect their dignity. Adopting this ethical approach, would enable them to engage meaningfully with this study and construct stories that fully represented their lived academic experiences (Bush and James 2015; Clandinin and Huber 2010).

In addition, focus group interviewing which is suited for obtaining different perspectives about the same topic (Bryman 2008) was considered in the current study. Even though there are certain advantages in applying focus groups for gaining insights into how UK HEIs are managed (Deem 2004, 2006) by generating realistic stories of what individuals think about the proposed theme (Bryman 2008), this method was considered as inapplicable for the current research. This is because during the process of data generation, academics could have conformed to the opinion of the majority and thus could be biased in their opinion about community relations (Sim 1998). This contradicted the rationale of this research which was to explore individuals’ perceptions and meanings they develop about their own actions (Taylor 1993 cited in Bryman 2008: 385) by respecting the freedom of academics to respond to questions in their own way (Pallant 2007).

As a result, ethical and methodological considerations have justified the reasoning for choosing in-depth, semi-structured interviewing as an appropriate tool to explore academics’ participatory experiences. The initiated interview questions which were developed in line with the conceptual framework of this study and in accordance with the research questions, allowed academics to freely express their thoughts and emotions about what was important to their career progression (Fontana and Frey 2008). Whilst in-depth, semi-structured interview as fundamentally interpretative research method
adequately fits the philosophical and methodological frameworks of the current research (Creswell 2003), there are several challenges which were thoughtfully considered.

As previously mentioned, in-depth, semi-structured interviews increased the degree of cooperation between a narrator and a listener because of reciprocally developed relationships in the course of narrative inquiry (Chase 2008) and thus, the generated themes were ‘filtered’ through academics’ views (Creswell 2003: 186). In this context, it was ensured that both rapport and credibility of the relationships were established at the outset in order to avoid biased questions and answers (Hermanowicz 2002). As a result, academics were not led by non-verbal clues and sighs of affirmation or skepticism of the researcher (Bryman 2008).

Moreover, during the research process all interviews were thoughtfully transcribed in order to ensure reliability of data. Additionally, the transcripts were made accessible to the interviewees in order to verify the accuracy of the expressed opinion (Bassey 1999). The transcription of the tapes was performed during the day of the interview or the day after in order to stay focused on the generated data. The process included the initial transcription of the tape and its verification. If both transcripts agreed, then the data were perceived to be credible.

The semi-structured interviews, therefore, could allow the researcher to overcome some weaknesses of both structured (by giving some freedom to the interview format) and unstructured interviews (by keeping sequence of similar questions) (Bryman 2008), that helped to increase the internal validity of the research. This was possible in this study, since the tentative interview questions were prepared ahead of time (Appendix 4) (dependability - reliability) (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Academics were asked about their motives for choosing career in HE; key turning points in their careers to date; career satisfaction; perceived impacts of power relations and access to resources; as well as challenges they encountered in their workplaces. Thus, this format of data generation allowed me to ‘control’ the line of inquiry (Creswell 2003: 186), making the process of interviewing consistent.

While wide debates exist regarding the external validity of interview data, narrative researchers argue for the importance of every narrative as giving unique insights within
a specific social context (Chase 2008). Thus, the chosen research method allowed rich contextual stories within a particular context be generated by asking questions and deciding on the depth of the discussed topics in accordance with the research questions. The next section will explain the importance of pilot study in this research.

4.3.2. Pilot study

The main fieldwork commenced after the research themes were pilot tested with three academics from the same public university (Cyprus). The pilot study was undertaken from December 2012 till January 2013. Initially the rationale for conducting a pilot study was to try out a research instrument (Baker 1994) and test the feasibility of the main fieldwork which was of a larger scale. It was important to test the appropriateness of the chosen research method, the questions in generating the required material and if any modification to the research tool had to be performed prior to the main fieldwork. Among other reasons for conducting a pilot study was my concern for polishing the research questions, testing the necessity of completing a research protocol in the course of an interview, and further considerations on developing the research procedure (Van Teijlingen and Hundley 2001).

Academics who took part in the pilot study were selected based on convenience sampling approach which recognises accessibility of the participants to the researcher (Bryman 2008). Apart from e-mailing the three academics (Appendix 1, Table 1), there was no initial face-to-face meetings with them prior to the pilot study in order to avoid any kind of prejudices from both sides. Hereafter, it was decided not to identify the names of the participants for ethical reasons because the Cypriot academic world is relatively young (around twenty five years) and the possibility that academics might know each other is quite high. Hence, this is merely an ethical issue that had to do with the researcher’s obligations to ensure participants’ anonymity and confidentiality (Creswell 2003) during the whole research process (Wiles et al. 2008).

Having established correspondence with the potential participants by sending them the access letter (Appendix 2), three academics took part in the pilot study. At the outset of every interview sufficient time was dedicated to the explanation of the main aim of the
research and the ethical issues (included in the access letter and the informed consent form (Appendices 2, 3)). After this, academics were given time to read the consent form, to ask for clarification about the context of the interview and to indicate their agreement to participate in research by signing the form. This technique proved very useful in building rapport and credibility with the participants and reducing the level of their anxiety. The average duration of interviews was 60 minutes.

The pilot work proved to be useful in testing the research method, ensuring that the chosen method was feasible (Baker 1994), unambiguous and generated rich data in accordance with the research questions. It also provided an opportunity to refine my decisions regarding the sample group, the research scope and the budget problems. Moreover, it assisted in testing the reliability and validity of the research design. During the data analysis, it was possible to rephrase few closed-form questions without changing their entire meaning (e.g. *do you believe that the changing economic and social conditions have affected the way faculty members view HE?* was rephrased as *how do changing economic and social conditions affect the way academics perceive HE?*). As a result, the final list of seven main research themes and tentative questions was developed (Appendix 4) which addressed the research objectives.

During the pilot interviews it was noticed that the right balance between listening and talking (Mason 2009) was made since ‘the less interviewer talks, the more information is produced’ (Gall et al. 1996: 31). The idea of making comments (additionally to the audio recorder) was rejected during the third pilot interview since a limited eye-contact with academics delayed the rapport development and made them be nervous, when trying to check the notes of the researcher.

Even though the pilot study was a required component of the research process due to the reasons discussed above (Creswell 2003; Baker 1994), this approach has been critiqued for the possible biased results caused by unrepresentative pilot sampling, when using the data from the pilot work in the main study (Bryman 2008; Van Teijlingen and Hundley 2001). This concern was carefully reflected in the research design prior to conducting the main fieldwork (Bryman 2008).
The decision to include the pilot data in the main fieldwork was aligned with the epistemological stance of this research which was social constructivism (Creswell 2003; Aronsson 1997). As such, every single interview (including the pilot interviews) added value and gained unique insights into academics’ lives within the research context (Yin 2009). Furthermore, the pilot study did not lead to modification of the research design, including the main research questions, the method of data generation (in-depth, semi-structured interview) and the way in which academics were initially approached (Van Teijlingen and Hundley 2001).

For the pilot study a convenience sampling strategy was used to select participants. As described above, this was because I relied on data from academics working at the same public University, who were conveniently available to participate in the study (Bryman 2008). This approach in combination with a snowball sampling strategy was replicated for the main fieldwork (Bryman 2008) as it enabled me to collect the emerged thematic patterns which in turn allowed a deeper understanding of academics’ experiences within the research context (Yin 2009). All the above considerations reassured me about the credibility of the research approach and reinforced my decision to include the pilot data in the findings.

4.3.3. Data source (the profile of the participants / sample framework) and data collection

The research fieldwork was conducted during five and a half months (from December 2012 till May 2013), including the pilot work, across a sample of 20 academics working in public universities (Cyprus).

In order to ensure the diversity of a sample group, a combination of convenience and snowball sampling strategies was applied in this research. Thus, when academics were chosen through the convenience sampling strategy which recognises accessibility of the participants to the researcher (Bryman 2008) (both at the stage of the pilot study and the main fieldwork), academics were targeted by obtaining contact information from public domain. No contacts were established with these academics prior to the initial correspondence, thus no prejudices existed. Consequently, in the case of the
convenience sampling, the selection of academics was based on the researcher’s judgments regarding the availability and suitability of the participants according to the purposes of the research. Additionally, a snowball sampling approach was applied since some academics suggested me to contact their colleagues. As a result, the chosen sample group comprised academics with varied years of working experience in HE (from three to thirty five years). They were employed in the participating public universities, holding tenure and non-tenure-track positions. This allowed a deeper reflection on academics’ working practices such as researching, teaching, writing and managing (Blaxter et al. 1998).

The possible limitation of the chosen sampling strategies (lack of representation of the total population) (Bryman 2008) was critically considered in accordance with the methodological approach of this research. The main intention of this study was to gain insights into academics’ varied lived experiences ‘within their socio-cultural context’ (Roberts 2002: 13) and thoroughly analyse their stories. Thus, the entire purpose was to intensively examine and understand the different aspects of academics’ participatory practices. It was important to interview academics of different age and with various years of working experience in order to enrich the generated data on their practices. 22 academics fitted these criteria, and 20 agreed to take part in this research. They represented different public universities (Cyprus) and various departments (the names are not identified in the text in order to protect the privacy of academics (Creswell 2003)).

Out of the academics who took part in the research, twelve are male and eight are female. Only one academic (research assistant) was new to a university position. Nine academics worked at University_1 (two in Department_1, three in Department_2 and four in Department_3). Seven academics worked at University_2 (three in Department_1, one in Department_2, two in Department_3 and one in Department_4). However, both Departments_3 and 4 were located in the same building and shared the same floor. Four academics worked at the same department at University_3. The main characteristics of the interviewees are presented in the Appendix 1.

During the process of data generation, a saturation point was achieved. At a specific point it was noticed that the themes were well developed in terms of richness. Shared
opinions began to reoccur and relatively no new themes on the studied topics were emerging (Strauss and Corbin 1998). This happened at the end of the seventeenth interview when ‘thematic exhaustion’ was reached (Guest et al. 2006: 65), meaning that adequate data were collected in accordance with the research questions (Strauss and Corbin 1998). However, three months after the initial correspondence, three academics contacted me by e-mail and expressed their willingness to participate in the research. As a result, the data generation process encompassed 20 interviews averaging 51 minutes each (from 40 minutes to 1 hour and 20 minutes), generating around 20 hours of oral data.

The choice of a suitable place and time for interviews was taken into consideration since this could allow the academics participating in this study be more responsive to the interview questions, because they knew that they were not heard by unauthorised people. As a matter of fact, this was likely to enhance validity of the generated data. Thus, the process of data collection required from my side extensive traveling to other cities. However, it was decided to conduct one interview per day (with the exception of three cases) due to the required time for transcription (the tapes were transcribed during the same day or the day after, depending on the duration of the interviews). The way in which academics were approached during the main fieldwork remained the same as during the pilot study - via e-mail with the access letter. In four cases, a reminder was sent to the potential participants one month after the initial e-mail. However, no response was received.

Academics were treated in the same manner as those who were interviewed during the pilot study. Prior to the interviews the analysis of academics’ CVs as ‘contemporaneous records’ (Roberts 2002: 105) was undertaken in order to identify the key turning points of their careers, including formal education, academic positions, research projects and publications. This information was obtained from the official websites of the universities (accessible to public use) and therefore accepted as true facts. At the outset of the interviews I shared with academics that their CVs were obtained from public domain and the reasoning behind this decision. This did not raise any ethical issues. The reasoning for collecting this information was the same as during the pilot interviews. It was important to understand the link between different aspects of academics’
professional lives (Goodson and Sikes 2001), verify the generated data (Bassey 1999) and thus increase the credibility of academics’ life story accounts (Roberts 2002).

All interviews started on time (agreed prior via e-mail or telephone call). At the beginning of the interview, academics were reminded about the purpose of the research, my role and projected length of the interview. Sufficient time was given to academics to clarify all aspects of the research process and the background of the researcher in order to establish mutual understanding and eliminate any uncertainty regarding their participation. This allowed me to engage academics in a small talk as a way to break the ice (Gall et al. 1996). Once academics read the informed consent form and agreed with the conditions, they were asked to sign it. There were no refusals at this stage. Some participants asked me for a copy of the consent form, so at the end of the interview they received a copy with both signatures (their own signature and that of the researcher (Creswell 2003)). At this stage, the participants were informed that the audio-recorded part of the interview started. No academics objected to be recorded.

During the interview process academics were very responsive to the questions and engaged in discussion by elaborating on their working practices. In some cases academics asked to rephrase some questions. This was performed right away in order to ensure that they understood the question and stayed focused on the specific topic. Even though the researcher should seek clarity throughout the interview, it was assured that academics were not directed by leading questions (Bryman 2008). All interviews were concluded once there was a reasonable belief that sufficient evidence was generated in accordance with the research questions. At the end of the interview, the academics were given an opportunity to clarify anything that was left unanswered regarding the research, the tape transcription and the opportunity to receive the written record of the interview for amendments before the data analysis. I then showed appreciation for their help and the opportunity given to set interviews with them. After that, the audio recorder was switched off. Every time after the interview, the duration of the interview and the anonymous number of the academic were noted down in order to use this information at the stage of the analysis which will be discussed in the next section.
4.3.4. Analysis of data / coding system

The data analysis was a sequential process which consisted of interrelated steps in order to make ‘sense out of the text[s]’ which were obtained during the interviews (Creswell 2003: 190).

Transcription

The transcription of the primary data was a time-consuming procedure. The transcription of interview tapes was organised during the same day of the interview or the day after (depending on the duration of the interviews). The process of transcription included 2 stages: (1) the initial transcription and (2) transcripts have been checked against the tapes for accuracy (sometimes several times) (Braun and Clarke 2006). To ensure confidentiality, all transcripts were named according to an anonymous code of each participant (Wiles et al. 2008) (Appendices 6 and 7). The copies of transcripts were accessible to academics for verification. As a result minor alterations were made (without affecting the meaning).

Since all interviews were carried out in English, there was no need to translate the tapes but to present the data as recorded (English is widely used in the academic world in Cyprus, so the participants did not have any difficulties to express themselves). Thus, this allowed me to keep the entire expressions of academics that significantly minimised the possibility of accidental loss of meaning (in case if transcripts had to be translated from Greek to English) and enhanced the credibility of generated data. At a later stage, the transcripts of the academics were analysed manually in order to become familiar with the generated themes, bearing in mind the ethical considerations that were at the forefront of the research process.

Thematic analysis of narratives

Before considering the method of data analysis used to research academics’ participatory practices, it was important to ensure that the chosen approach was consistent with the methodological position of this study - narrative inquiry which was used to think about and study the academics’ experiences as lived stories (Clandinin and
Connelly 2000). As explained in section 4.3.1 ‘Research method’, in-depth, semi-structured interviews as a narrative research method enabled me to interview the academics and listen to stories of their experiences (Clandinin and Huber 2010), thus providing an object of analysis (Riessman 2002).

In adopting a narrative inquiry in the current study, the main emphasis was on exploring the stories academics generated about their learning practices and the importance of the context in which they made sense of their development (Roberts 2002; Clandinin and Connelly 2000). However, to get a more focused understanding of their interpretations of the context through which they constructed their stories (Creswell 2003), academics’ narratives were organised thematically (Bryman 2008; Riessman 2002). To do this, after the interviews were completed, a general sense of the emerged lived stories was gained by using line-by-line coding of transcripts, thus allowing a deeper level of analysis (Creswell 2003) (Appendix 7). Thus, the focus of thematic analysis in the current study was on identifying and reporting the common themes across academics’ detailed stories, in relation to the research questions (Braun and Clarke 2006). This was achieved by repeatedly reading each of the 20 transcripts and noting down initial ideas (Cunningham and Hillier 2013; Braun and Clarke 2006). This was accomplished by generating 49 topics based on 295 references (Appendix 8). As the initial topics emerged, the transcripts were reread in order to ensure that these topics appeared in most of the transcripts (Ryan and Bernard 2003).

Further analysis of the emerged topics involved organising the initial material into ‘chunks’ (Rossman and Rallis 1998: 171 cited in Creswell 2003: 192). This ensured that only the overarching topics that were pertinent to the research questions were collated into themes (Braun and Clarke 2006). This helped to narrow the 49 topics into 15 themes (Appendix 9) based on common patterns within academics’ transcripts (Braun and Clarke 2006; Creswell 2003). The refining stage was accomplished by interconnecting the 15 themes into a storyline until a final set was developed. The final set included the two themes and the six sub-themes which were used to present the research findings and to describe how CoPs influence career development of academics in Cypriot public universities. The two themes that have emerged through the data analysis process are (1) the origins of participatory practices of academics within CoPs
As the discussion chapters show, vivid and compelling narratives of academics relate back to the literature in order to ascertain what they mean. The choice of the thematic analysis was mostly driven by my theoretical interest in the chosen field based on the research questions. However, as Chapter 7 will show, one of the sub-themes of the second theme (academic roles) emerged across the entire 49 topics as a consequence of the inductive analysis, and had no direct link to the research questions (Braun and Clarke 2006). This sub-theme, which was titled ‘academic roles and career in higher education’ was included in the data analysis due to its significant input in enriching the explanation of the core themes. As a result, a combination of theoretical thematic analysis and inductive thematic analysis was used to provide a thematic explanatory framework (Braun and Clarke 2006; Creswell 2003) through a theoretical lens. At all stages of this research, the ethical considerations which will be discussed in the next section were thoughtfully considered.

4.4. Ethical considerations

Being acquainted to the regulations and standards of how research should be processed, I am aware of the current legislation system regarding intellectual property and data protection. This study involving human participants was given ethical approval by the University of Leicester prior to the pilot work (Appendix 5).

Due to the fact of a relatively small population size of academic staff working in Cypriot public universities, their personal stories could be identified after the transcription of data. As a result, I accepted and thoughtfully considered all the potential risks along the whole research process, and took responsibility for anticipating and ethically addressing these matters. As part of this responsibility, I made the potential participants be aware of the nature and the level of risk they took by agreeing to take part in the research. I guaranteed that this research would be carried out according to the ethical guidance on research of sensitive topics (The University of Leicester research

The ethical issues regarding avoidance of a possible harm to participants emphasise the importance of gaining access without any deception (Bryman 2008). Based on the ethical imperative of do no harm (Wood 2006) it was ensured from the very beginning of the research study that psychological well-being of the participants was not going to be affected during the study. When planning this research, it was made certain what precautions had to be taken to avoid moral judgments during the interviews. It was essential to conduct the research based on academics’ voluntary decisions to be involved (Bryman 2008). For this purpose, academics were communicated by sending them an access letter with the intention to explain the main aim of the research and its scope.

The access letter that was submitted with the ethical application, primarily informed the potential participants about the research method and the way in which the generated data would be utilised, as well as the expected benefits of the results for them. They were asked for their permission to keep a tape record of the interviews, and were ensured on confidentiality ‘through anonymisation’ applied to the research records (Wiles et al. 2008: 418). This was required to enhance the probability of obtaining honest answers. Moreover, they were explained that they would be interviewed a few times (if required) on a series of issues related to their academic practices, workplace learning activities and career development. All participants, to whom access letters were sent, agreed to be recorded during the interviews.

The principle of obtaining the informed consent is critical for any research since ‘there is no room for ethics [...] where there is no freedom of choice’ (Gallo 2004: 470). Academics were given an informed consent form (Appendix 3) by hand at the outset of the interview in order to get their approval to participate in the research by signing the form. The consent form also contained details about the study, how the research process would be organised and how the data would be kept. While the consent form included information regarding the research process, it also provided greater protection to
participants’ confidentiality and anonymity of the results. It was clarified to all participants in written and oral form that their identity would be protected and the right of privacy would be acknowledged (an invention of privacy). As a result, an anonymous coding system was introduced, according to which transcripts and academics’ CVs were given a sequential interview number, an anonymous number of the institution, the department in which academics worked and their gender. Thus, confidentiality was agreed prior to and followed during the interviews, while analysing and storing data, announcing the results (Bassey 1999) including ‘the actual writing and dissemination of the final research report’ (Creswell 2003: 66). In this way, the relationship between the researcher and the participants was developed thoughtfully at all stages of the research.

The participants were given time to read the consent form and ask for clarification about the context of the interview in order to enhance mutual understanding about the research process. They were also explained that they could refuse participating or withdraw from the research due to their personal reasons at any time without reprisal. Thus, both oral and written permissions were obtained from all participants prior to cooperation, in order to ensure that they made ‘a fully informed decision’ to speak (Wood 2006: 379) and participate in the research (Bryman 2008). This was considered as an inevitable step to facilitate collaboration with participants by building mutual trust and avoiding undesirable consequences due to a possible misunderstanding (James and Busher 2013).

For example, a few academics asked for extra clarification regarding the structure and the context of the interview questions prior to the interview. All queries were treated respectfully by giving a general picture of the interview topics in order to eliminate possible biases. Additionally, a briefing session was held as requested by a potential participant. At the end, two academics who responded to the first e-mail and asked me for more information about the research, refused to be interviewed due to their workload. Their decisions were respectfully accepted (Gallo 2004).

Another ethical issue was related to the interview tapes and the transcripts, which were stored in a place accessible only to the researcher. All the materials were saved electronically, and the computer in which the files were stored was protected via password (which was known only to me) in order to eliminate losses or unauthorised access to the findings at all stages of the analysis. The storage of data complied with the Data Protection Act (1998) following the Code of Practice. Once the transcription was
completed, the tapes were destroyed (Statement of Ethical Practice, the British Sociological Association 2002). Consequently, the issue of trust and security was assured to the participants, which was connected to the success of maintaining a solid relationship with them. During the pilot study all aspects of the research design, including the research themes, method, ethical considerations and the analysis of data were carefully verified.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research questions addressed in this study that arose out of the analysis of the literature review and included the methodological framework that informed both the choice of the research design and the approach to data analysis. The philosophical considerations of the study were justified with reference to the existing debates in the field. The chosen epistemological position of the research (social constructivism) was explained.

This chapter presented an explanation of the reasons for applying the qualitative approach and the case study which involved a single case with three embedded units. Also, the choice of in-depth, semi-structured interviews in line with philosophical and methodological considerations was justified. Substantial analysis was presented on data source including a detailed description of the participants' profile, sample framework and the process of data generation. The chapter considered both the coding system and the way in which the emerged themes were analysed. The ethical considerations were presented in accordance with the logic of the research process. The next chapter will include the main findings of the research in line with the theoretical framework of the study.
Chapter 5

Thematic analysis and discussion

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter presented the justification of the philosophical approach which influenced the choice of the theoretical framework and methodology of the current research. As noted in Chapter Four, thematic analysis was adopted (in line with the epistemological position of the study – social constructivism) to explicitly analyse the thematic patterns that came from a multiple reading of academics’ transcripts based on the research questions of this study.

The two themes that have emerged through the data analysis process are the origins of participatory practices of academics within CoPs and transforming the academic workplace. Chapter Five and Chapter Six present the findings based on the first theme - the origins of participatory practices of academics within CoPs. This theme signposted academics’ practices within disciplinary communities, their LPP and how power inequalities between academics impact upon their learning within CoPs. The second theme - transforming the academic workplace - is explored in Chapter Seven by presenting data on academics’ roles in light of new policies affecting HE as well as on their employment relationship and perceived determinants of their career success. This theme reveals academics’ understandings of the perceived transformation of academic CoPs.

As the discussion and analysis chapters will show, the research findings are linked to the main aim of the research and provide a means by which to understand how CoPs influence career development of academics in Cypriot public universities. The research findings are presented through the voices of the academics to reveal their experiences of participatory practices within academic CoPs and discussed against the theory that has emerged in the literature review chapters.
5.2. The origins of participatory practices of academics within CoPs (Theme 1)

This section presents the first theme, by elaborating on the three sub-themes which emerged through the data analysis. The sub-themes discussed in this Chapter are (1) the origins of academics’ workplace learning; (2) legitimate peripheral participation in academic CoPs; (3) existing barriers to situated learning activities within academic CoPs. Chapter 6 will discuss the fourth sub-theme of power relations between novice and ‘old-timer’ academics, in order to extend our understanding of academics’ participatory practices within and beyond disciplinary communities.

Drawing on academics’ narratives, the first section incorporates their views on learning practices within departmental and disciplinary communities and how these are facilitated and managed. The analysis also includes academics’ reflections on their LPP within CoPs by identifying some controversies with the existing literature. It is questioned whether LPP causes challenges to both ‘old-timers’ and novice academics based on evidence of ‘lateral’ moves and membership in multiple CoPs. This is followed by the analysis of the existing barriers to full participation of academics within their CoPs. It includes the reasons and the impacts of such interruptions on academics’ participation and their career development. Special attention is given to the context learning factors (Eraut 2004) and how academics relate these to the potential barriers to learning.

5.2.1. Academics’ views on the origins of workplace learning

In this section the chosen narratives of academics represented the complexity and richness of their learning experiences in their CoPs. The story of the lecturer (R10-U1D1-2) revealed her learning practices at the beginning of her employment at another university and led to the discussion about her first experiences in the current department. Even though she recounted that the process of doing general things was comparable to her previous workplace, she reminded herself that the head of the
department initially informed her about the main duties. In this regard she recalled the following:

This meeting was before starting the position. I had a very informal meeting [with the chair of the department] when we discussed my duties, what exactly I was expected to do, and she also said about the whole process of ranking and evaluation. [...] But that was very very informal [...]. Perhaps it was something that was established as a practice, because the two colleagues who started at the same time had a similar meeting. (Lecturer - R10-U1D1-2)

By saying this, she just briefly described her conversation with the person she was working with and in a sense depended on, without going into detail. Though, quite surprisingly, the lecturer was not sure about the regularity of such meetings. This was an indicator of the limited number of such informal meetings. However, CoPs require ‘cultivating’ especially by heads of departments who should support informal workplace learning of academics (Viskovic 2005: 403). When the lecturer (R10-U1D1-2) was asked more specifically about how she managed to learn her direct job duties, she acknowledged that she was experiencing uncertainty with the way things were performed:

The greatest challenge which I was very bad prepared was the administrative stuff, because, let’s say, it is a very different mentality. [...] many different forms that should be completed all the time [...], so whenever it was a new message from, let’s say, the department chair, secretary - saying, ‘we need this information from you’, I had to find someone at least with 2 or 3 years of experience and say: ‘What is this? What do we have to do?’ It is like entering a new language, because it was a new language. (Lecturer - R10-U1D1-2)

She described her feelings of coping with new conditions and working on incomplete records. This kept her on her toes when she was managing budgets or submitting supportive documents:

I got a message from a secretary that she cannot accept any papers. I said [to her] that ‘I expect you to do something to support me’. [...] I feel too much responsible for this kind of [administrative tasks] they sent to academics, and I think that this is not the part of my job – everyday issue of managing stuff. [...] I started very very slowly. (Lecturer - R10-U1D1-2)
Her view on non-existence of any kind of support refuted the meaning of LPP as set out by Lave and Wenger (1991). The lecturer (R10-U1D1-2) was not gradually involved in community relations alongside ‘old-timers’, but felt insecure as a novice academic since she was forced to fully participate in the array of new practices at the outset. Challenges like these explain that she faced contradictory demands of the required practices within the departmental community and felt uncertain about her responsibilities. This concurred with Knight and Trowler’s (2000) view on the importance of feedback by departmental managers to novice academics in order to reduce their feelings of uneasiness along with offering some viable insights into how to deal with uncertainty of ‘multiple roles and multiple, usually tacit, expectations’ (2000: 73).

Even though the lecturer (R10-U1D1-2) recalled on having a formal meeting (after the meeting with the chairperson), it did not provide any expected support. Having considered similar scenarios, Hemmings et al. (2013) argued that those who create induction programs should take into account the backgrounds of new academics in order to meet their learning needs. For example, the lecturer (R10-U1D1-2) considered this meeting as an opportunity primarily to get to know colleagues and establish relevant contacts for future reference:

> It was too much information in one meeting. It was helpful because you could identify people who could help you with practical issues, but at the same time some of the presentations were very very general and it was like - I could go and find that kind of information on the website. (Lecturer - R10-U1D1-2)

Thus, her participation in formal meetings was primarily aimed at cultivating her networks and discovering opportunities through purposive discussions with colleagues (Eraut 2002). Thus, she gradually developed strategies for enhancing learning of necessary work-related skills from everyday experiences (Fuller and Unwin 2004). This supported the findings of Knight and Trowler (1999) who acknowledged an important role of a coherent set of formal and informal practices to an effective socialisation of new academic staff. Similarly, Boyd (2010) showed the value of integrated formal and informal professional learning practices for new lecturers as a source of consistent support.
The lecturer (R10-U1D1-2) explained that the availability of a common network was considered as necessary for her personal exposure to advance her knowledge and perform her work appropriately. She acknowledged the importance of taking advantage of interdisciplinary networking as a learning experience. Even though these remarks support Wenger’s (1998) point that identity formation is socially determined, the lecturer’s experience demonstrated its dynamic development due to her participation in various practices. This is because sustaining her membership in the disciplinary community was dependent on her participation in diverse activities. She viewed this experience as a challenging process, by stressing the significant role of her engagement in research and administrative practices within and outside her department:

*The support in my institution is coming mostly from colleagues so it is the networks that people build among themselves, and [...] those networks are among people who are doing exactly the same thing. [...] this is how we started seeing connections in our work.* (Lecturer - R10-U1D1-2)

Thus, she accepted the importance of being involved within a high-‘density’ community as one in which individuals were directly connected to one another (Jewson 2007), and this is how learning of work-related duties took place. Even though the lecturer (R10-U1D1-2) argued that her participation with colleagues from other departments played a crucial role in her adaptation to a new environment, she described this process as risky since her colleagues were also newcomers. Her comments on the importance of cooperation between people who faced similar problems (when one member provided assistance to another, and the learning process appeared to be mutual) supported the findings of Remmik et al. (2011). They claimed that equal status among novices creates a solid basis for their interaction that allowed them to openly discuss and share their experiences, concerns and ambiguities about the future.

Even though the lecturer’s initial learning experience contradicted the notion of LPP as described by Lave and Wenger (1991), it worked well since she managed to feel more confident about her practices. The way she described her relationship with other newcomers showed that she valued their support as a significant contributing factor to her learning output:

*There* was two other colleagues starting at the same time. *We did not know anything, we were not familiar with the services at the University, procedures -*
with all these, so [...] because of that lack of experience - and even when we do different stuff, we consult with each other. (Lecturer - R10-U1D1-2)

Her experience coincided with the findings of Hakala (2009) who proved that due to the process of taking up many responsibilities the junior members acquire competences that help them to feel more confident and independent. Eraut (2004) also showed that the learning outcome which is developed through social inclusion presents a unique platform for individuals to feel more confident in taking advantage of available learning opportunities. In the case of the lecturer, her participation across various settings enacted her membership in her departmental community through the construction of her valued academic identity. This reiterated Wenger’s (1998) argument that identity formation is enabled through constant negotiations of shared practices with which an individual is engaged and refined by the way in which he/she is perceived by other members:

*After the first semester I felt [...] my voice could be heard, and what I mean by that – I was confident enough to participate in departmental meetings because that is where you see people and feel like - this is where the job, the work at the department is done. Otherwise you do not see anything. Unless you have some kind of collaboration [with different communities], there is nothing that demands to discuss or to develop a project.* (Lecturer - R10-U1D1-2)

She mainly considered the importance of initiative behaviour as a means to expose her learning needs and to know how to formulate them in order to be heard and understood by others. Otherwise, there was no guidance. This conformed to one of the implications made by Trowler and Knight (2000) regarding the importance of intensive interaction as a social experience for new academic staff during the first days of employment.

The following narrative is of another academic (special scientist - R1-U1D1-2) who also outlined the significant role of ongoing learning within the department when dealing with uncertainties:

*I have to be frank and tell you that in the department, when we want to share something - is the informal discussion, conversation that happens.* (Special scientist - R1-U1D1-2)
Even though she acknowledged the provision of formal training at a workplace, she described her experiences as unsuccessful by stressing the difficulties she faced in transferring what was learnt to reality:

All these were very helpful till when I was in the classroom for the first time, and I had to face adults, adult students. You put a lot of things into context and, in that manner you are able to [...] overcome difficulties that might happen and, of course, as time passes things become easier, much easier. (Special scientist - R1-U1D1-2)

Similarly to the lecturer (R10-U1D1-2), she explained that the nature of work itself required continuous learning through intensive participation in a classroom. What is interesting is that she described her learning by highlighting its progress, saying that ‘as time passes things become easier, much easier and, you are able to [...] cope with the challenges’. However, she admitted the importance of engagement with academics from other disciplinary communities since it could assist her skills and knowledge development:

In such a case a lot of researchers, a lot of academics are gathered; you can learn a lot, you can see how people think, or you can learn about different ideas or more innovative ideas than yours, let’s say. This can help, let’s say, to the development of an academic, especially when people are coming from a different background. (Special scientist - R1-U1D1-2)

Similar sentiments on the importance of allowing academics from different disciplines to work interdependently and take initiatives across their communities are mentioned but not expanded in the literature (Cox 2013). When reflecting on her working agenda, she explained that the system of resource allocation within her departmental community pushed her to take initiative when tackling work-related tasks without having any support:

[...] you have the freedom to, basically, organise the classes the way you want, and you are basically given the general context what they want to pass to the students, but it is up to you to organise everything and to find let’s say textbooks, and the material, any technique you feel more comfortable with. (Special scientist - R1-U1D1-2)
The special scientist was operating from a marginal position of her departmental community because she was excluded from a shared repertoire of resources and negotiation of practices with other academics. Her words reiterated Wenger’s (1998) point on autonomous and isolated practices of individuals, especially when they are kept at a marginal space. However, isolation from a shared repertoire of practices restricted her development. Knight and Trowler (2000) recounted similar findings based on novice academics’ perceptions of their work context as the ground that facilitates individualistic nature of work. Whereas Viskovic (2005) addressed the critical role of the institutional support for teachers’ informal learning to be able to transfer and share their tacit knowledge, the special scientist (R1-U1D1-2) commented on the fact that she was working in isolation from the beginning.

In order to delve deeper into the findings, the story of the assistant professor (R13-U3D1-2) was considered. She described her isolated practices in the departmental community. Due to perceived uncertainty about her professional future, she decided to take her own responsibility for her learning. She wanted to retain her academic identity within her disciplinary community through active participation in varied activities that could enhance her opportunities for legitimate participation in her department. Thus, she valued her participation in committees she was attending and networking activities at the international level. In other words, her membership in the disciplinary community involved shifting locations and led to participation across wider communities that significantly improved her work in the department:

_I am learning many things about administration. Even I do not like it, I learn. It is important to learn how to be a member of the committees, how to work with these administrative things and laws. This is good. I learn of course, from being a part of networks and communities that are close to my topics. I learn from other colleagues, from their work, from their projects. [...] I improve my work through these networks._ (Assistant professor - R13-U3D1-2)

Her experience adds important insights into the CoP framework (Wenger 1998) since restricted access to central practices, affected her identity construction which was enabled through her wider participation in a number of communities across formal and informal emerging groups. She was looking for more intensive interaction with her
cough colleagues since she considered this practice as a basis for her academic identity formation:

*It is important to our department to improve more the interactivity among the members of staff. But it is a new department, [...] so there are so many things we have to establish (the rules), to establish a concrete base.* (Assistant professor - R13-U3D1-2)

She revealed the reasons why certain practices could not be implemented as fast as they should have been and viewed her learning experience as a continuous process of adjusting to new conditions and people:

*We are trying to organise some seminars [...] to introduce ourselves to our colleagues. [...] The years are passing, we are finding more and more ways to communicate and to establish the work among us. But it needs time.* (Assistant professor - R13-U3D1-2)

I could see her determination to invest her knowledge and expertise to the departmental development. Her words reiterated Billett’s (2001: 20) argument that workplace learning is ‘an ongoing and inevitable process arising from participation in work practice across working lives’.

A further narrative of an associate professor (R3-U1D2-1) produced a rich set of data illustrating the nuances of his learning. His story provided a different view on his adaptation to academic practices. After verification of the biographical data taken from his CV, the main focus was mostly on his initial experience by exploring the way in which he managed to learn the job. The theme on incompatible role of formal training to an academic work emerged in his narrative:

*When I was in University *<named>* , there was a kind of training seminar about academic teaching, higher education teaching, which I attended, but it was not particularly useful. So, you mainly learn through trial and error, through doing things.* (Associate professor - R3-U1D2-1)

This was in accordance with the identified discrepancies between anticipated and actual teaching practices (Murray and MacDonald 1997). The associate professor (R3-U1D2-1) continued reflecting on his teaching practice by admitting the role of inspirational
experiences beyond the formal curriculum. This was evidenced in the following discussion about formal training workshops:

The problem is that these are fine if you want to get trainers into the training route, but academic teaching is about empowering students, getting students to start thinking for themselves, and also transfer of knowledge. [...] So, you know, getting people to learn how they can teach skills is not always useful, it is only partially useful. And I think I did not finish that seminar. I did not see the point of finishing it. (Associate professor - R3-U1D2-1)

His description of formal learning experience was slightly narrow, but what we can get out of it is that he did not consider this experience as valuable, because he learnt from the process of trying the reality and gradually adapting to it, working with difficult and sometimes unpredictable cases. Such views reiterated Lave and Wenger’s (1991) argument that learning is continuously integrated with an increasing participation in practice through ongoing negotiations and by gaining access to the full array of ongoing activities towards full membership in CoPs. In this context, the associate professor (R3-U1D2-1) argued for the importance of paying attention to the relationship between teaching and research practices across departmental communities that can allow academics to develop their identities and understand their roles in HE (Henkel 1997). This topic was also challenged by Coate et al. (2001) who argued for the importance of linking teaching and research. In order to show the supportive role of continuous learning practices through discussions with students, the associate professor admitted the following:

The research fits teaching and sometimes teaching fits research, because people ask the right questions and then you go back and say ‘hang on, this is a real issue!’ (Associate professor - R3-U1D2-1)

While he found his previous working experience as very useful, he revealed that he learned to cope with the challenging tasks and uncertainties by engaging in social interaction with his colleagues. Even though he admitted limited physical presence of academics in the department (only during office hours), he commented favourably on the value and opportunities of informal interactions with them. In order to describe the importance of his established relationship with colleagues at the beginning of his employment, he commented:
Now, what helped me [to be accepted]: well, I knew people here, because I was a few kilometers down the road when I was in another institution <named>, so I did not need to struggle for things, [...] people were just writing to me, talking to me, calling me up, explaining to me what actually to do, so it was guidance.

(Associate professor - R3-U1D2-1)

Even if he emphasised that his previous working experience was of help, it was apparent that the way he learnt his job duties was strongly situated in practice. In relation to the social aspect of work, there were some deep reflections:

*I guess support was at the informal personal level. You know, people actually were coming over and were saying: *'Look, this how things work. If you want to do this, then you have to do that first’ or ‘it is a good idea’. (Associate professor - R3-U1D2-1)*

Even though he had established ‘old-timer’ credentials before entering the departmental community, there was an indication that his adaptation was not so smooth. He went on explaining that he did not receive any support from more experienced academics regarding some necessary aspects of teaching. He learnt his new duties by questioning his performance. These findings add further insights into Wenger’s (1998) understanding of multiple membership, since the story of the associate professor highlighted how his ‘lateral’ move from another community within the discipline influenced his identity due to his feelings of growing insecurity when he was teaching. He faced different expectations (James 2007):

*The first two years in Cyprus - it was hell: I thought the students were dead, [...] because nobody was going to ask a question; and then you develop things like ‘ok, they need 20 seconds before I will ask a question not 10 seconds, you need to prompt them, you need to make sure that the jokes will not have any overtones.* (Associate professor - R3-U1D2-1)

His understanding was inconsistent with the findings of Viskovic (2005) who argued that tertiary teachers continue relying on their previously acquired knowledge and skills when teaching in a different context. The associate professor (R3-U1D2-1) acknowledged that once he entered a new domain of practice, the cultural background of students and the accepted norms of student-lecturer interaction had an impact on his
teaching style. His experience was in accordance with the findings of Jiang et al. (2010), who indicated that different pedagogical approaches (in China and UK) influence student behaviour and engagement in a classroom. The associate professor commented:

_There is one thing that in-house training sessions do not always consider - the culture of students. This very little thing could be extremely important to have at the University, especially if the University has non-native teaching staff - to explain to them the things about the society, the social culture, the social values, the social reflexes in a particular society. Cypriots are not going to ask questions. When I first came here I had a very British teaching style which I think I still have, but this does not work in Cyprus._ (Associate professor - R3-U1D2-1)

Thus, he highlighted the difficulties that he experienced during the process of his ‘acculturation’ once he joined the department (Jiang et al. 2010). Whilst describing his working days, the associate professor (R3-U1D2-1) reflected on the necessity of support in case if academics are challenged by cultural differences in student behaviour.

Another academic (the lecturer R2-U1D2-2) also reflected on her learning experience in the department. She described the obstacles she experienced while trying to get used to new working conditions. Her comments were very distinct to other academics due to unmet expectations at the beginning of her employment which reshaped her identity. She thoroughly described her past working experience, but her main concerns were related to the context of her present departmental community and the expectations she failed to live up to. She recognised that she felt very emotional. Her experiences framed her behaviour in a certain way:

_I remember it was that day when I was really very frustrated because I started teaching and asking students to respond to questions that I asked and I had them working in groups [...]. I could feel that students did not like that. I was very disappointed because it has to be done the way I thought. It has to be done through a lot of interaction between myself and students._ (Lecturer - R2-U1D2-2)
She reflected on the perceived struggle between her constructed academic identity (due to her ‘old-timer’ credentials) and the demands of the present community (in which she was a newcomer). She continued elaborating on her experience, including rich insights about departmental support:

*I have not got any support. Nothing, zero. It was just me and the courses I had to teach and I had to make most of the courses. No support at all, and [...] this was something that has been bothering me for quite some time when I came here, because when you come to a new institution you would expect somebody at least to take you around, to show you the premises or to tell you ‘this is the office when you need to go to do this, this is the library, this is this, this is that’.*

(Lecturer - R2-U1D2-2)

She felt ignored by more experienced colleagues and her words coincided with the suggestions of Knight and Trowler (1999) regarding the importance of induction that helps academics cope with uncertainties they face and unfamiliar dilemmas of their new roles. Even though Knight and Trowler (2000) accepted that isolation and conflicts between academics become more evident nowadays, they did not explain what enhances academics’ capacity to adapt to a new department in such conditions.

My findings showed the tendency of receiving limited support on procedural knowledge for those academics who were newcomers to a specific departmental community (including the lecturer R2-U1D2-2). In the following comment there is clear evidence of looking for assistance outside her departmental community:

*I realised that we need a lot more support not just in the way we teach, or the content of the courses or how we get to choose courses or how the courses would relate to other people’s courses at the department, but also a lot of admin work that we also need to do. [...] It was by participating in various academic committees where I found out myself how the University works. [...] I was afraid of making mistakes [...]. [I wished], for instance, to have somebody [who could] confirm whether what I was about to do was the right thing to do.*

(Lecturer - R2-U1D2-2)

Undertaking a ‘brokering’ role, she was trying to negotiate a repertoire of practices across the boundary. However, her experience challenged Wenger’s (1998) description
of participatory practices across boundaries since the lecturer assertively described the
difficulties she experienced both at a personal level by admitting that her experience
was bothering her for quite some time and at a professional level when she was making
mistakes, resulting in her insecurity. This is because she could not equally negotiate a
repertoire of shared meanings for her department (Busher et al. 2007):

*I have to say this and I am very strong about it because very often and - I still do
feel that - I work in isolation because my area of specialisation does not relate
directly to what other people do in the department, only indirectly. And, of
course, there are people in the department, whose work does not relate at all,
this is completely outside my sphere, specialisation, so I did not receive
guidance.* (Lecturer - R2-U1D2-2)

Her words supported the views of Palmer (2002: 179 cited in Smith and Rust 2011)
regarding the fragmentation and isolation of academic community culture. However, the
individualistic type of work in the department indicates its weak communal ties
(Warhurst 2008). Moreover, the lecturer (R2-U1D2-2) described limited collegiality and
support because some more experienced academics did not help newcomers become
fully contributing participants and did not legitimise their position (Busher et al. 2007).
In contrast to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) understanding of LPP, lack of clear guidance
was very frustrating for the lecturer and resulted in perceived tensions in relation to her
role in the department because core members were inhibiting the process of induction.
This is why frequent complaints were present in her story when describing her
relationship with some colleagues within and outside the department:

*I believe in interdisciplinary collaborations [...] because they give you different
perspective on what you do, they help you work and they support you and it is
nice to have collaborations with other departments. Otherwise you feel isolated,
secluded and you do not really progress, you just repeating yourself in your
research all the time.* (Lecturer - R2-U1D2-2)

She explained a combined effect of learning associated with her participation in
multiple communities (Hughes 2007), otherwise she experienced isolation (Viskovic
2005). This merits special attention since the lecturer (R2-U1D2-2) showed lack of
reassurance towards her progression in such conditions. She valued wider collaboration
with like-minded colleagues since this contributed to the expansion of her research
prowess (Ng and Pemberton 2013). The lecturer (R2-U1D2-2) explained how academics work closely together in developing research strategies and enhancing disciplinary knowledge in communities which are not necessarily their formal departments. Instead, she considered her participation across departments by informally engaging with other academics, as a source of her development (Bushe et al. 2007). However, she showed her interest in enhancing participation within the departmental community and described her experience of being in a meeting with the dean and other officials, where she expressed her dissatisfaction regarding the lack of a regular supportive mentoring scheme:

*I raised my hand and I said: ‘Look. I am fine, [...] but I need more information about the University. You need to do something to induce smoothly all the newcomers’. I do not know how strong I was, but a few months later [...] they uploaded the manual for people who come for the first time to University, giving information about all kinds of things, not just the bureaucratic or admin work, but also [...] how to survive as an academic in the University. (Lecturer - R2-U1D2-2)*

Similar initiatives were described in the literature. For example, Knight and Trowler (1999) commented on instances when mentoring relationship tends to be initiated and integrated by new academics. Similar findings were of Warhurst (2008) who admitted that the required information is provided to newcomers when they ask for such help implicitly. Her experience of being thrown in at the deep end of a new environment without any support undermined her commitment to the departmental community as she felt that more experienced academics did not provide regular support (Jawitz 2007). This negatively influenced her identity construction (James 2007) and discouraged her to invest into the development of the community (Hughes 2010). Even though she found collaboration with some of her colleagues useful, she did not want to interact with other more experienced colleagues in her community since she did not consider them to be her role models because their identities did not fit with her self-image. This adds new insights into Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concept of LPP since the lecturer’s initial practices in the department negatively influenced her effective functioning and her attitudes towards her colleagues:

*I realised that I got to learn more about members of staff during gatherings informally rather than seeing them in the corridors and saying ‘hello’ and ‘good
morning’. [...] For some of them I have already done that. For others - I know that they are very busy - they got their families, so I think it is a matter of time. For others - I do not care. I do not want to socialise with them. [...] I do not want to learn from them, because I do not want to end up being like them. (Lecturer - R2-U1D2-2)

As demonstrated above, without getting to know the way in which academics were trying to adapt to a new environment, it was difficult to understand how they were getting access to the central practices of their departmental communities. The lecturer (R4-U1D3-1) was initially asked regarding how fast he managed to be fully involved in the departmental routine. While he was fairly excited about his new position, he described his first working days as challenging because he tried to expose himself to new experiences when trying to prove that he deserved his position. This is evidenced from the following extract:

I had mixed feelings. I was happy because I got the job which I really liked. [...] but when I really got it and came here I have realised that I probably have to prove myself, prove myself to the colleagues, to prove that those who selected me were right to select me, and I think that I mostly wanted to prove to myself that I deserved this job. (Lecturer – R4-U1D3-1)

In order to gain insights into the way in which he learnt the job that was required to perform, he was asked whether he was assigned to any induction course to get to know the rules and the procedures in the department. The answer was negative. He explained that responsibilities and roles he undertook were not predetermined, but rather emerged from practice. He concurrently elaborated on this experience:

It took me more than 2 years to feel that I am really standing firmer because many things I did not know, and now I feel certain more and more. (Lecturer – R4-U1D3-1)

In relation to the question regarding what made him feel certain about his position, the reference was made to the value of his previous experience that helped him adapt to a new environment:

Although there are big differences regarding how the system works in different universities - more or less is roughly the same job. I mean, you need to teach,
you need to publish, you do want to have good relationships with your colleagues, you should supervise students, you are encouraging them to study hard, and there is some bureaucracy, some paperwork you need to do. So more or less I knew what my basic duties will be [...]. (Lecturer – R4-U1D3-1)

However, after commenting on his earlier working experience, he indicated that it would be helpful to have a guide or a set of conventions (developed collectively) that novices could implicitly adhere to:

It is funny, because there are no clear rules. I would have hoped that somebody would give me a document certain pages long and they would say ‘this is all you need to know, [...] how the system works here’. (Lecturer – R4-U1D3-1)

Even though he mentioned that lack of formal guidance was bothering him up to a certain extent, he did not describe his working life as a constant struggle for support since his colleagues were there to informally assist him:

I think it was mostly guessing and word of mouth and short breaks from work with colleagues in the corridor, you know, over a cup of coffee, informally asking questions. (Lecturer – R4-U1D3-1)

Viskovic (2005) similarly found that tertiary teachers are likely to receive support informally through participation with peers in community practices. Indeed, the lecturer (R4-U1D3-1) indicated that getting information from others by asking relevant questions (Eraut 2004) (during discussions by the water dispenser), was accepted as an appropriate input to his learning. When asked to elaborate on his initiatives towards collaborative experiences, he reflected on the necessity to share ideas regarding how things should be performed. He said that most of his learning was happening through his constant involvement with other colleagues that positively influenced his identity construction and made him feel confident about his position in the community:

I have been working so hard, it is unlikely that people may ask questions for which I may not have answers yet. [...] I have proved to myself that I am as good as anyone else here. So, you know, I feel more comfortable. (Lecturer – R4-U1D3-1)
He explained how he became fully engaged with the repertoire of shared practices which facilitated changes in his academic identity. This experience reiterated Lave and Wenger’s (1991) understanding of a smooth nature of LPP. The lecturer explained that his involvement in work-related practices through ‘noting facts, ideas, opinions, asking questions, observing effects of actions’ (original emphasis) (Eraut 2004: 250) helped him build solid relationships with colleagues that, in turn, enabled him to feel as a member of the community:

*I guess unless you feel more comfortable with other people, you cannot really feel that you are member of the group and vice versa. I mean these two things go together. And it takes some time as well to develop interpersonal relationships.*

(Lecturer – R4-U1D3-1)

Consequently, he considered that his personal attachment to departmental practices allowed him to be fully engaged to the array of activities. This was a major learning experience for him since it helped him learn his job requirements that reinforced his confidence. This is in accordance with the theoretical position of Eraut (2004) who suggested that social interaction between participants, who are engaged in discussions and joint activities, is considered as a necessary condition for workplace learning.

Even though the lecturer (R4-U1D3-1) did not express his discomfort due to lack of formal support in enhancing new learning practices, at this point of the analysis it is worth mentioning that some academics explained that formal learning was required as a means of becoming clearer about work duties and responsibilities. For example, reflections of the lecturer (R18-U1D3-1) on how both formal support and cooperation with more experienced colleagues enabled novice academics to feel confident in making decisions, attracted my attention. Similar experiences were considered in the literature (Rainbird et al. 2004) regarding formal learning as a distinct form that enhances confidence. Reflections on the value of formal learning and ‘its certification’ for the performance of employees (Rainbird et al. 2004) were rejected by Lave and Wenger (1991), but concurred with my findings as a required source to thrive in a new workplace.

There were no academics who reflected on the negative side of formal mentoring arrangements. In contrast, academics admitted positive influences of formal induction
on work performance even if they did not receive such support, but wished to have. This contradicted the findings of Knight and Trowler (1999: 26), who acknowledged that in most of the cases a formal induction course is perceived to be inconvenient due to unsuitable timetable and its ‘too general or too intimidating’ content. For example, the lecturer (R2-U1D2-2) accepted that a mentoring scheme could be very useful for newcomers in order to gain the required support. However, her expectations to get such type of support remained open:

*Maybe departments need to allocate [pause] older members of staff within the department to become mentors for new members, right? Of course this needs to be done [with someone] you like and this needs to be arranged systematically, so for new members not to bother, and later on become nuisance for older ones, but at least for new members to know where to go, in case they need something. So this needs to be sorted out internally.* (Lecturer - R2-U1D2-2)

Similarly, the lecturer (R18-U1D3-1) made a direct reference to the importance of implication of a formal learning system in his department. He was among those who emphasised the importance of feedback and support (as contributors to his learning experience (Eraut 2004)) in a formal way through student assessment or mentoring. He believed that this could strengthen his confidence in performing tasks and positively influence his work:

*Assessment is really really helpful to me and I begged [students] this semester to do the assessments because junior members of the staff [...] really need these assessments, because you want the other side of the story. So I think [...] it was going to be good to have some experienced guidance, some mentoring [...] in order to see whether there is improvement in development.* (Lecturer - R18-U1D3-1)

In other words, the lecturer considered constructive criticism on his performance as an important source for his development. His experience coincided with the findings of Warhurst (2008) who admitted that there are minimal occasions where experienced academics intentionally facilitate learning of new lecturers. The lecturer (R18-U1D3-1) explained the necessity of co-participation in workplace practices with more experienced colleagues. However, he emphasised its limited nature. From his story it
was evident that he valued opportunities to observe their work, as the best option to improve his job performance:

*I have seen people ‘going’ to associate professors, from lecturers to assistant professors and from ‘nothing’ to lecturers, so I pretty much know what is asked from a novice academic.* (Lecturer - R18-U1D3-1)

His words sustained the findings of Eraut (2004) about the importance of working along others as an activity which allows participants to learn new practices. However, for the lecturer (R18-U1D3-1) lack of opportunities to develop new skills through formal mentorship was viewed as a significant deficiency for his performance improvement. He described a desirable pattern of support for his development:

*I wish* an experienced member of the department came to my lectures and saw my performance, and we could discuss a bit on that part. When you are teaching, it is not what you know, how much you know, but how you pass it on. I was and still after one year and two months [...] I feel a bit insecure in my teaching. I do think that I need help and I will appreciate [it], but people are very busy. [...] Things are very intuitive. (Lecturer - R18-U1D3-1)

He admitted the importance of receiving feedback on his teaching practice from a more senior colleague in order to reflect on his own progress (similar practices are explored by Tummons 2011). Instead, he experienced limited support from more senior colleagues who were overwhelmed with various work-related obligations. However, formal recognition of employees’ competences in a workplace significantly strengthens their skills development that contributes to their professional growth and organisational performance (Meghnagi 2004). In contrast, lack or inadequate feedback has a strong negative impact on motivation and commitment of employees (Eraut 2004). The lecturer (R18-U1D3-1) expressed his worries about limited collegial learning from interaction, but rather reacting intuitively and reflecting on mistakes and achievements. He felt uncertain about many aspects of faculty work and categorised his practices within his disciplinary community as roughly restrictive, by describing his status in ambivalent terms. This reflects the major barrier to learning (Fuller and Unwin 2003).

Similarly, another associate professor (R6-U2D1-1) admitted the role of formal induction as an important practice introduced in his department for newcomers due to a
more cohesive approach to learning of work principles. Indeed, induction as a form of ‘professional practice’ positively assists new entrants into an organisation and equips them to step up more readily and effectively (Knight and Trowler 1999: 23). According to Warhurst (2008: 466), one of the reasons of participation with a mentor is that the former ‘establishes the newcomer’s legitimacy’. His motivation (R6-U2D1-1) to continue working in HE was sustained by his active participation with elder colleagues in ‘pre-service’ practice (his doctoral study) which was quite empowering and beneficial. His comments coincided with the findings of Warhurst (2008: 454), who admitted the importance of ‘formal pre-service practice’ to preparation of recently appointed lecturers for conducting high-quality research outputs. In addition to his description of a supportive environment during his first years of working in HE, he described his continuous development by admitting the necessity of focusing on day-to-day work-related experiences since: ‘you are never prepared for the academic job. Basically you are trained along the way’. (Associate professor - R6-U2D1-1)

Connected to these words was his reflection on his first practices in the current department in comparison to his working experience outside Cyprus. He admitted that his previous experience played the foremost role in his adaptation to the current workplace:

I knew from my previous experience that I would be judged on the basis of my merit of academic work, meaning publications, research and so on. So this is basically the primary area of concern, this is where you put most of your energy and then obviously - your teaching, your students [...]. And then you have a lot of time that is being wasted in committees, in other tasks. (Associate professor - R6-U2D1-1)

Later, he expressed his concerns about the frequency of social interaction in his departmental community:

Basically, everyone is so busy with their own work, there is not much social interaction except in committee work, [...] in official kind of, official meetings, there are obviously many of those meetings, so it is not like we do not see each other, there is social interaction all the time, but it’s not the kind of interaction that always takes place among friends. So it is mostly collegial and professional. (Associate professor - R6-U2D1-1)
However, he admitted his contribution towards assisting non-permanent staff, based on his personal experience and explained the following:

*We do induction course, sessions at the beginning of each academic year [...]. I am basically responsible for my colleagues, non-permanent members who teach courses that are within my expertise, within my academic area in general. So, basically I try to provide support, send them material, explain, give them information, so it is an ongoing process.* (Associate professor - R6-U2D1-1)

From the above discussion, we can see the presence of collegial interaction in the workplace. The discussed experiences of the associate professor encouraged me to gain more reflections about academics’ participatory practices.

When asked about departmental learning practices, two academics (research assistant - R15-U2D3-1 and lecturer - R12-U2D3-1) acknowledged the role of a mentor as worthwhile for building confidence that confirmed the results of earlier research studies (Knight and Trowler 1999). Mentoring arrangements are important while academics are introduced to the main principles of work, including the ‘complex mandates with which higher education institutions are being charged’ (1999: 23). In particular, the research assistant (R15-U2D3-1) stressed that he learnt mainly through informal interaction with a more experienced colleague:

*If it was a short course which gives you a lead to upcoming events, I think it will be very helpful, but in my case because I started as a PhD student, I was dealing with the professor from the beginning, it was the only choice for me.* (Research assistant - R15-U2D3-1)

For him, informal induction provided a certain benefit, namely giving him an opportunity to boost confidence when performing duties. This point accorded with Garrow and Tawse’s (2009) findings who explained that the process of receiving positive feedback from the assigned mentors (experienced academics) boosts confidence of new academics:

*At the very beginning I was not as good as I am now, and I am still learning, and I will always learn. At the beginning I was always trying to catch some time from the professor whom I am directly working with, just bothering him as much as I can, using his experience. I knew about the theoretical part of the job, but*
[when] it comes to practice when you have to apply all these theories and bring it to practice, [you need support]. (Research assistant - R15-U2D3-1)

His words supported Knight and Trowler’s idea (1999) about mentees’ initiatives regarding informal mentoring relationships. Although the research assistant mentioned that it was not difficult to get in touch with the professor, he also mentioned that he had to be very initiative in commencing his discussion about emergent issues. In addition, he reflected on the existing false impressions among young academics on mentoring and added his own view:

Sometimes they feel that they are getting interrogated or they feel the pressure that somebody is always watching their work and not approving it, so this is the wrong impression that they can get. But if it is put in the correct way, it is very good because [...] it will keep a young person on the track. It is very easy to lose your track. (Research assistant - R15-U2D3-1)

Similarly, the lecturer (R12-U2D3-1) accepted a range of positive learning experiences from mentoring at work, but he did not get this support:

I think mentoring will definitely speed up both the advancement of research and the groundbreaking ideas coming about; you will get more friendly and welcoming environment. I often get the impression that I wish someone was here to advise me on some of these issues. I think I learnt by doing, as oppose to have someone mentoring me. So I think that is the biggest challenge. (Lecturer - R12-U2D3-1)

He believed that the provision of formal support for newcomers could have encouraged him to learn quicker, since the relevant information was going to be provided. Mathias (2005) similarly found that formalised mentoring develops a sense of collegiality and contributes to an increased confidence of new university teachers, being an integral part of their professional growth, confidence building and research self-efficacy (Hemmings et al. 2013). The lecturer (R12-U2D3-1) in turn, considered this approach as proactive towards anticipating possible difficulties that new members faced:

I would vote for having this kind of [formal] training sessions, so you can join an institution. I think for the institutions it is important to say ‘for the next two weeks or for the next two months you should take these courses, and we will tell
you what we expect from you and we will tell you how things are done in the institution, and how you should behave’. (Lecturer - R12-U2D3-1)

What attracts additional attention is that, even if some academics in my study explained the importance of formal mentoring to the creation of a more welcoming environment for cooperation, they recognised lack of such practices in their workplaces that obviously limited their development within CoPs.

The special scientist (R9-U3D1-1) in his story described the importance of establishing and maintaining a positive working relationship with colleagues in order to feel safe (Cunningham and Hillier 2013). He therefore emphasised the importance of trust among colleagues for sharing tacit knowledge that increased his confidence in relation to faculty practices:

> Most of the things here are informal, are not that formal. From the one hand it is helpful, because you do not have to go through a specific procedure, but still sometimes you are not certain about certain things. There is a need to build trust among colleagues. If you can believe them and trust them, then you can follow what they say. (Special scientist - R9-U3D1-1)

His reflections were consistent with the literature which identifies that a sense of mutual trust and respectful relationship should be valued as an important ground for learning (Wenger et al. 2009) and knowledge exchange (Eraut 2002). Otten (2009: 415) expressed similar concerns about the role of trust in regard to negotiated origins of fairness regarding ‘values and ethics in science’. The special scientist (R9-U3D1-1) admitted the critical role of his situated learning which is nurtured in ‘friendly’ environment (Knight and Trowler 1999: 33) of the disciplinary community.

Following the analysis of participatory practices, the next section will consider academics’ LPP (Lave and Wenger 1991) and raise questions as to whether the learning process of newcomers takes place through their shared practices with ‘old-timers’ within their CoPs.
5.2.2. Legitimate peripheral participation in academic communities of practice

According to Lave and Wenger (1991), the learning process of novice participants in a CoP is inevitably integrated with community relations, while they strive to move from periphery towards more central practices. However, academics in the current study indicated different instances of their development within departmental communities despite their positions and authority (James 2007).

Indeed, in examining academics’ stories it was evident that some experienced academics explicitly described their practices as peripheral to their communities. This issue was also embodied in the argument of Colley and James (2005: 1) who questioned LPP as ‘a largely unidirectional movement of novices’. As a result, the tensions between newcomers and full participants (examined in the previous section) and the insights into their multidirectional collective inquiry, gave rise to the necessity of conceptualising the learning of academics by broadening the scope of LPP. In this sense, the findings of my research supported the perspective of Fuller et al. (2005) who challenged Lave and Wenger’s (1991) views on learning as inherently embedded only in LPP.

According to the current study, some novice academics felt lack of reassurance due to limited co-participation with ‘old-timers’. Since they were not given the opportunity to learn by engaging in practices alongside ‘old-timers’, the supportive nature of LPP to CoPs’ nurturing (Lave and Wenger’s 1991) was questioned in the current study. To grasp and describe the meaning of LPP as well as the range of obstacles on the way to full membership in disciplinary CoPs, a number of topics will be further analysed. These include the consideration of (1) the LPP of academics, (2) the role of induction arrangements, and (3) the importance of prior learning experience before joining their current CoPs (Fuller et al. 2005; Fuller and Unwin 2004; Evans and Kersh 2004).

In the discussion about participatory practices and legitimate peripherality, two ‘old-timers’ described the way they learnt from young academics. The first story is of the associate professor (R6-U2D1-1), who was involved in the process of setting the environment of the department from the very beginning, and at the time of the interview he was in his mid-career. In describing his learning experience, he accepted a few
instances when he learnt from his interaction with younger colleagues. He perceived this process to be beneficial, since this ensured a win-win situation. He acknowledged that such practices opened doors to mutual learning and stated that learning from younger colleagues appeared to be praiseworthy for his performance outcomes:

You always benefit in terms of reflecting on your practices, [...] the questions they ask or clarifications they ask, making you think carefully [about] your own practices; you test the advice you give, [...] if it works or not. It is a mutual process; [...]. You benefit too. (Associate professor -R6-U2D1-1)

His reflections showed that ‘old-timers’ who are full members of their CoPs continue learning new practices, that coincided with the findings of Fuller et al. (2005). The narrative of another professor (R5-U2D1-1) in his late-career reinforced this point of view. He described his learning from younger colleagues as a possible contributor to the process of mastering his performance. Such views enrich Lave and Wenger’s (1991) description of LPP. The associate professor (R5-U2D1-1) indicated that interaction with younger colleagues was about embracing practices of what was new, that facilitated his learning. Even though he was involved in the setting of the apparatus of the department (more than 10 years ago), his cooperation with novice academics created potential valuable opportunities to learn. Indeed, when he was asked about the benefits academics gained out of such practices, he admitted the following:

I learnt a lot from younger colleagues of mine, especially when it comes to using new research software. [...] It was not there when I was taught statistics and statistical analysis and data analysis, so that I learnt from younger colleagues.

(Professor - R5-U2D1-1)

Consequently, he indicated meaningful, collaborative and absolutely beneficial aspects of learning from his younger colleagues. In addition, he admitted that academics should learn by participating, observing and anticipating. For him, his participation within the disciplinary community was of primary importance for shaping his academic identity. Thus, his learning was inevitably situated in a distinctive cultural environment of his discipline (Wenger 1998).

Another account of the associate professor (R16-U2D4-1) with 17 years of working experience in HE provided a contradicting view on LPP (Lave and Wenger 1991). His
experience was similar to the experience of academics described above in terms of the functional roles. However, his story particularly showed that the transitional period from the legitimate periphery towards full participation was blurred due to existing uncertainties:

*There were many sorts of challenges that I had to face and I am still facing them. [...] I still think of myself being in this transitional adaptation period and I do not know [how long] it would last, but I do not think I can say with certainty that it is coming to an end at the end of this year or at the end of next year. I just do not really know. That is not really good.* (Associate professor - R16-U2D4-1)

Even though he was one of the most senior academics in his departmental community (once he moved from another institution, he was assigned to set up his team and develop courses), he perceived himself being in the transitional period. Despite the fact that his role was central to the development of the community, he was failing to move out of the periphery and felt no sense of ownership. This point is explained by Lave and Wenger (1991) who argued that identity is developed and perceived through participation with others (Wenger 1998). In the case of the associate professor (R16-U2D4-1), restricted community relations that he encountered did not allow him to learn through initial engagement with more experienced peers that resulted in his delayed transition. Eraut (2004) similarly explained that failing to receive sufficient support while performing challenging tasks, is unlikely to increase confidence of individuals. Although the associate professor (R16-U2D4-1) put priority to the performance of his direct duties, his learning and adjustment occurred in a slow mode through his engagement with practice. He explained that he continued experiencing shock due to the restrictive environment which did not allow him ‘*to spread, [...] the wings fast enough*.‘

In academics’ narratives there was an indication of how novice academics influenced ‘old-timers’ who had to catch up with new experiences and ideas, which were inserted into the environment along with new entrants (Hakala 2009) (something that was not revealed by Lave and Wenger 1991):

*On the same day, [...] three members came here, me and two colleagues of mine, and we were three ‘freshers’. I think we changed the dynamics of the group [...] we were a big number enough in order to change the dynamics. So whereas in*
the past there were fights for some reason, because we came, people were more careful to engage into fighting in front of three new people. So I think they benefited, the department with our presence, just because we were here, […], just because we were [interested] to work, and just because were willing to engage in a dialogue and […] cooperation. (Lecturer - R4-U1D3-1)

His experience supported Wenger’s idea (1998: 97) that new members can bring new opportunities to increase commitment within the community and ‘these new relationships can awaken new interests’.

In regard to LPP, additional attention should be paid to the experience of a female academic who described her initial practices as involving tasks which are normally performed by the full participants of the departmental community: that supports the findings of Goodwin (2007). Her conflictual identity was developed in response to the requirements of the departmental community in which she located herself. In contrast to Lave and Wenger (1991), she articulated her worries regarding her initial experience in the community:

*People even if they are at lower ranks ([...] lecturers or assistant professors), we have to work in a high level committees or to do work which maybe full or associate professors have the responsibility to do, so we learn earlier, because we do not have many full professors, we do not have many associate professors, […]. It is not an easy thing to do. You need to have experience. This is good, from the one hand, but from the other hand, it is difficult. We manage.* (Assistant professor - R13-U3D1-2)

During the analysis of the findings it became evident that not only novice faculty members experienced a demanding process of LPP within their departmental communities. Even for ‘old-timers’ who were well prepared and resourced in terms of their prior knowledge and experience, the process of adaptation to a new environment and gaining insights into what it is required to become a full participant were both described as problematic, biased and unsafe. These findings challenged Lave and Wenger’s (1991) conceptualisation of LPP as a gradual engagement in shared activities of a CoP and a direction towards full participation. For example, a female lecturer (R17-U2D1-2) provided a detailed explanation of her first practices in getting accepted by the
academic world of Cyprus. It is evident that from the very beginning of her employment in Cyprus, she considered her career as a journey of doing new things and exploring new options.

*I got very happy when I saw my selection committee board. They were all distinguished professors [...]. I got very happy because I had a chance to present myself to them and to get a job out of thirteen applications.* (Lecturer – R17-U2D1-2)

However, once she was asked about her initial experiences within the departmental community, she recalled her unmet expectations and disappointment about the environment she joined that negatively influenced her identity formation:

*I have experienced issues because I am a woman, because I am younger in the academia and because I am not Cypriot. [...] I felt that people are biased with me because I was not kind of, I was not a good girl in terms of: ‘I am going to tell you what you would do’, so [...] you do not say your opinion quite clearly. I am not like that, I am a straightforward person, I came here because of my CV, I did not know anybody, so I have realised that this is the system and it is not very clear.* (Lecturer – R17-U2D1-2)

Her narrative conveyed her experience as challenging. She did not get a proper induction neither in the form of a structured peer discussion nor in a more informal way of interaction:

*The [...] professor invited me to his office to tell me: [...] ‘I am very busy and if you want to see me, you better ask the secretary and make an appointment’. I was shocked. I thought: ‘ok, I am a colleague here and I am a new member of staff’. He wanted to say to me: [...] ‘I will not have really much time for you’. Sometimes he would be also insulting [...]. I know that he is not like that with everybody. The true story is that he was not really happy for me joining the program.* (Lecturer – R17-U2D1-2)

She explained that things have not turned out as she hoped, but she decided to take responsibility of managing her survival. Her story revealed the issues which were related to sex discrimination (Thomas and Davies 2002) and also to poorly established
relationships with ‘old-timers’. She went on sharing her initiatives when coping with the situation and described her first experiences as ‘untidy’:

I would ask other colleagues working in different programs of studies, [...] about the books, the system. And, of course, what I have to say is that I did not have a mentor. I know, in England it is very important. When I was a post-doc, I had a mentor. As a part-time lecturer I had a mentor, I could go and talk my problems [...]. I knew that he would respect me and that would be confidential. (Lecturer - R17-U2D1-2)

She was describing her interpersonal relationship with more experienced colleagues as insecure, by questioning the reality of how she could be productive and able to intervene with the system if she experienced constant anxiety:

I have never had a proper induction and I have never had a mentor at the University. I have to say that was really bad: bad for the University because if I was in a better position, I am sure that I would have given more to the University and the academia. (Lecturer - R17-U2D1-2)

Her ‘lateral’ move from another HEI inevitably opened up some of the complexities involved in the situated negotiations with others. She lost her status benefits (James 2007) since her present role was incongruent to her previous experience. This explained why she decided to behave not in conformity with the rules developed by someone else regarding what she was supposed to do. Such experiences were not examined by Wenger (1998). However, in such cases what is likely to happen is that newcomers can be conceived to be marginal that restricts their development (Hong and O 2009).

The lecturer (R17-U2D1-2) ended up with a protest against limited acceptance by the community once her colleagues expelled and marginalised her while legitimising her role (Owen-Pugh 2007). Her words supported the argument of Jawitz (2007: 133) regarding peripheral participation as full of problems in terms of inequalities since it is ‘characterized by varying degrees of consensus, diversity or conflict’. In contrast to Wenger’s (1998) understanding of conflicts within CoPs, the lecturer (R17-U2D1-2) explained that misunderstandings significantly reduced her trust in her colleagues. An important theme which is consistent to her story is the recognition of the importance of induction arrangements for new academics. Even though the initial induction programs
for new academic staff are of vital importance (Knight and Trowler 1999), most of the interviewed academics did not receive any induction. Most importantly, they were looking for this support. This was one of the reasons why mutual engagement in shared activities was perceived to be limited by some academics.

While induction facilitates academics’ adaptation to a new CoP, it enables them to gain necessary skills in order to effectively function (Knight and Trowler 2000) and be gradually developed into ‘longstanding’ members of their CoPs (Staniforth and Harland 2006: 186). The foundations of the latter are developed via a dialogue between an individual and the community and thus, induction might contribute to the community development itself (Lee et al. 2004). In contrast, limited engagement with the established practices within the department has enduring effect on the institutional culture (Boice 1992 cited in Staniforth and Harland 2006: 194). The evidence from the generated data of my study supported the above argument. Indeed, newcomers who were kept at a marginal position and felt themselves disempowered (O’Donnell and Tobbell 2007) attempted to adopt earlier learnt practices and thus, modified the practices of a CoP that they joined (Evans and Kersh 2004).

Some academics expressed their concerns regarding adaptation without getting the required support in order to function successfully. While the lecturer (R2-U1D2-2) viewed her previous experience as useful, she reflected on a complicated transitional period of adaptation to a new environment and the existing constraints that were prevalent in the departmental community. She explained that she did not feel comfortable participating in common practices with some colleagues:

*So even though, orally it was an invitation for us, for new members of the department to approach the older members of the department - this was mentioned just once at the departmental meeting and that was it. We did not really receive any invitation. Maybe they expected us to go to them, but as persons they are not very welcoming. [...], so you do not feel comfortable to approach them and discuss your work and your area of research. (Lecturer - R2-U1D2-2)*

Her experience contradicted the arguments of Wenger (1998: 100) who explained that ‘the peripherality [...] must engage newcomers and provide a sense of how the
community operates’. In contrast, the lecturer (R2-U1D2-2) mentioned that from time to
time she experienced loneliness while performing tasks and trying to cope with the
requirements of the system. She had to figure out how to survive on her own that
transformed her major learning curve due to limited access to central practices. In the
following extract she shared her thoughts on this matter:

*Sometimes you get overwhelmed, disappointed and you feel like you want to stop*
*but you cannot because of the pressure of the University and, of course, your*
*own pressure: ‘like I need to do something, I need to carry out my research’. So*
*even though you feel disappointed, the next day you wake up and say: ‘ok, you*
*have to start again because I cannot go back’.* (Lecturer - R2-U1D2-2)

She was not happy with the assistance that was available and did not feel confident in
tackling her practices. Her experience coincided with Eraut’s (2004) argument for the
importance of support in the workplace as necessary for becoming more confident in
responding to challenges. Her comments about lack of mutual engagement with
colleagues were evident:

*I did not get information about other more important things rather than being*
*shown around. [...] Very often I would make mistakes, the papers could come*
*back and I would need to start from scratch. It was messy from the beginning.*
(Lecturer - R2-U1D2-2)

Thus, she explained that she was restricted from getting access into deeper areas of the
departmental community. As a result, she was looking for acceptance from other
communities where she could share her research experience and be involved in common
research activities that allowed her to develop knowledge and skills. In contrast to the
argument of Fuller and Unwin (2004; 2003), the lecturer (R2-U1D2-2) widened her
participation outside her departmental community due to the restrictions she faced in
getting the required support for her development, which directly affected her sense of
belonging and identity construction:

*Very often we work with people outside the department and with people from*
*Universities abroad and we do not work with people within the department [...]*
(Lecturer - R2-U1D2-2)
She explained that in order to find support and proceed with her development she had to initiate new contacts, taking an active role by ‘breaking’ out of her protected environment:

*I realised that academics need to take this kind of initiative. Of course they need to be very careful whom to approach. First of all, because you can easily be rejected and this is not very good for you personally or for your academic profile, but it is a risk you need to take. [...] It is like breaking out of your own nice protected environment, exposing yourself somehow, and if people respond to that, what you get is a very nice collaboration either on the research paper or project or publication and sometimes it is very nice when you take initiatives and it does produce something at the end.* (Lecturer - R2-U1D2-2)

She valued her active participation in the research community that allowed her to be integrated with other academics that opened up new possibilities for maintaining her academic identity. However, James (2007) explained that academics who are engaged in a number of CoPs might experience insecurity within their departments due to status differences and loss of respect.

During the data analysis, the importance of previous experience to the construction of a valued academic identity in response to the requirements of departmental practices was revealed that challenged the CoP theory. Moreover, my findings reiterated the argument of Evans and Kersh (2004) who asserted that skills that were previously acquired can become central to a learning process in a new workplace environment. The following citation of the lecturer explains that her previous work-related obligations helped her to perform teaching practices in a new setting:

*The previous employment was at another University, it was a private one, but still it was a University. I think I was prepared, and what I brought with me was teaching and research practice. Maybe mostly teaching, because I was teaching similar courses, even though I did have new courses (I had to create them), but again it was all about organising the new content, organising a new course, but the whole process of doing - I was familiar with. [...] So, I had something to build on.* (Lecturer - R10-U1D1-2)
However, even if some academics were previously exposed to many aspects of academic work which were similarly performed in a new setting, they acknowledged limited co-participation with other academics within departmental communities that negatively influenced their academic identities. These experiences reiterated Wenger’s (1998) argument that identity construction requires community membership and even experienced academics require support. This is because transfer of knowledge between different CoPs within the same discipline is not a straightforward process (Staniforth and Harland 2006). For example, the associate professor (R14-U3D1-1) admitted the difficulty of acceptance to the departmental context due to the perceived differences with a local setting. Despite the prior experience in other academic establishments, academics who came from Greece described the difficulties they experienced during the process of their ‘academic acculturation’ when becoming part of a new group (Jiang et al. 2010):

> You have to join the culture of the country, the culture of the organisation in order to understand how people work, the way people think – this was maybe the most difficult case. (Associate professor - R14-U3D1-1)

Another academic faced similar problems in his workplace mostly in terms of mentality, norms and attitudes adhering in various cultures:

> I have faced a very different mentality of people. [...] And this is what I find really interesting in terms of social psychology, but very demanding and restrictive academically at times. (Associate professor - R16-U2D4-1)

Even though the lecturer (R2-U1D2-2) was exposed to HE prior to her relocation to Cyprus, she faced difficulties while trying to get used to Cypriot academic environment. She acknowledged the observed differences in student behaviour (in Greece and Cyprus), and how this influenced the way she interacted with them:

> I found a lot of differences between my undergraduate students in <named> [Greece] and undergraduate students here, because the culture is so different and because there is a long tradition of a lecture-type courses at the University <named>. They expected me to lecture them, to stand there to simply lecture them [...] which was not the case for me. [...] so it was very different conditions than I used to work with. (Lecturer - R2-U1D2-2)
Her experience questioned the theorising of peripherality as ‘relatively low-risk environment’ which involves a deepening participation within a CoP (Jawitz 2007). In contrast, she found her transition to a new community challenging and confusing because of the existing uncertainty regarding how to tackle the tension between conflicting and sometimes overlapping tasks. Her views are in line with the findings of Boyd (2010) on workplace tensions of new lecturers (nurse and teacher educators).

Even though Lave and Wenger (1991) described learning practices via the developed relationship between newcomers and ‘old-timers’ (adepts in CoPs) (Lave and Wenger 1991), my findings showed evidence of a restrictive learning environment (Fuller and Unwin 2003) that affected newcomers’ participatory practices. Lack of regular feedback and discussions about the community itself did not allow newcomers to gain a shared understanding of the domain of community knowledge and whether they fit into it, in order to continue acquiring competence (Eraut 2004). Thus, Lave and Wenger’s theorising (1991) about experienced colleagues being central to the development of novices into fully participative members (Goodwin 2007: 100), cannot be entirely applied to all communities in my study. This is going to be further analysed in the following section which explores the barriers to situated learning within academic CoPs.

5.2.3. Existing barriers to situated learning activities within academic CoPs

Academics who were interviewed in this study acknowledged that multiple membership and plurality might occur to be a significant barrier to their full participation in their disciplinary communities. In other words, my findings contradicted the argument of Wenger et al. (2009: 9) who acknowledged that diversity sets the scene for learning, because in ‘a healthy’ CoP which embeds a fertile environment, any disagreement can be turned to be productive.

In the previous section academics portrayed the value of the support and trust of their peers as one of the most important contributing factors to building their confidence and reshaping their identities. In contrast, limited periodic feedback postponed academics’ full participation in CoPs. Further reflections on the barriers to learning were explored
in this section with the aim to better elaborate on the origins of academics’ participatory practices situated within and beyond CoPs. While different in emphasis, reflections on peripheral participation as central to their acceptance in CoPs were scattered throughout the narratives of academics regardless of their age and experience. The following commentary was extracted from the narrative of the associate professor. His attention was focused on the declining daily social interactions among colleagues that had an inevitable effect on the degree of academics’ attachment to a primarily established social circle:

There are all different factors and the most important thing, probably [is that] people and myself [are] under continuous pressure and doing too many things at the same time, so just cutting down on social aspects of work whenever they can. Retrospectively looking at it, I do not think it is a good thing. (Associate professor - R16-U2D4-1)

He recognised that the way in which academic work was controlled by the institution, negatively affected cooperation among colleagues and restricted their informal communication within the department (Knight and Trowler 2000). In essence, the existing organisational constraints in terms of extensive workload that academics encountered, significantly shaped the boundaries of departmental communities (James 2007). Another associate professor perceived his social interaction with colleagues to be rather partial due to different external obligations:

The physical presence of people is limited because we have to be here during our office hours and only people who are actually working in their offices are here, but very few people are working in their offices. (Associate professor - R3-U1D2-1)

His experience was in accordance with the words of Lave and Wenger (1991) who admitted that it is not co-presence that becomes a cause for the existence and development of a CoP, but rather mutual interest of participants in the practical aspects of the tasks to be performed. However, further analysis of the narratives of academics showed that physical co-presence in a CoP and regular interaction, gave academics greater control over their practices that positively developed their confidence in achieving full participation. According to my findings, common space was considered as significant for the development of the mutual practices of academics (Wenger et al.
One of the lecturers expressed his concern on the initial deficiency of information that caused uncertainty, confusion and stress:

I would have hoped that somebody would give me a document certain pages long and they would say: ‘this is all you need to know’ (what time you have to come to the office, how you will deal with the students, how you teach), thus you know how the system works here. (Lecturer - R4-U1D3-1)

Lack of clear rules of how to perform tasks and limited access to information (Ashton 2004) provoked him to seek for these details by guessing, rather than gradually developing sensitivity towards his duties, and by acquiring knowledge of the necessary guidelines required for his proper performance.

Another point on the barriers that prevented academics from full participation was about the existing biases. One of the lecturers commented on her inadequate participatory practices with her senior colleagues. She considered this to be the main reason of her partial adjustment to community practices that negatively influenced her performance:

I never felt security in the program and I never felt security with two colleagues of mine. (Lecturer - R17-U2D1-2)

She explained that the environment of her departmental community was not conducive in order to work productively; she could not feel safe since she was harassed by her peers. She described several instances where she was bullied by her colleagues:

I am aware that there are [...] colleagues [who] would like to be in my position and they would not like the fact that I am a person that they cannot control. [...] There were times (most of the time) here I had my mouth shut. [...] I would be like that: be polite and kind, but after what happened to me - I have realised that these people [...] are not hiding their behaviour, and if I am victim and I suffer from something as a new academic why should I not talk about that to people that might help? (Lecturer - R17-U2D1-2)

This is an example of dysfunctional community relationship that was subjectively perceived as intimidating due to exerted clear dominance over her. She admitted that she did not expect to face verbal abuse and violence in an academic community. Similar to her, another lecturer (R2-U1D2-2) when reflecting on her initial experience in the
The departmental community admitted that lack of guidance from more experienced colleagues or limited social support negatively influenced her development. She explained that such constraints affected her poise to perform job duties more than anything else: *we end up working in isolation and this is not very good either for the department or for the University.* She was left on her own to make sense of her experience in Cyprus, while coping with difficulties:

> Sometimes you get overwhelmed, disappointed and you feel like you want to stop but you cannot because of the pressure of the University and, of course, your own pressure. (Lecturer -R2-U1D2-2)

Her isolated position from more experienced colleagues sharing the same working site, contradicted the opinion that the real reason for isolation is lack of physical presence in a CoP, for example due to unemployment (Beck 2007). In the case of the lecturer (R2-U1D2-2), she was not formally rejected from the departmental community, but still felt secluded. In other words, her feelings were developed in response to a limited access to shared repertoire of resources and practices due to incompatible attitudes and individual characteristics of colleagues. The following account further illustrates her worries:

> I know some of them are much more productive like I am, much disciplined, but as a person I do not think I have any respect for them. If I do not have any respect for them, and this is my opinion, I cannot see them as my models and I do not want to follow their ways. (Lecturer - R2-U1D2-2)

The words of another lecturer indicated similar feelings and experience:

> Unfortunately, it seems that it is rare at least from my experience [...], to have people that have the time or the willingness or the motivation to be there and mentor you. It seems that everyone is there doing their own little thing, they cannot be bothered either because they have other things [to do rather than] to spend time and say: ‘look, this proposal you have written, you should motivate it better’. (Lecturer - R12-U2D3-1)

His reflections uncovered the reasons why he considered his participatory practices within the CoP in a negative light. This was because of the limited attention received from his colleagues who did not provide feedback on his performance that could have strengthened his confidence in succeeding within the workplace (Eraut 2004). He
admitted that if he had assistance on how to tackle some challenging tasks, this could have contributed to his development within the disciplinary community. He explained that such support should be provided at least when he felt insecure about different practices. His reflections were consistent with the findings in the literature, voicing the importance of support to individuals as a contributing factor to their professional growth (Allen et al. 1999).

The story of the lecturer (R4-U1D3-1) about his participatory practices showed that his initiative to ask for help and support to perform his tasks was ignored by more experienced colleagues:

*I raised this issue of not having any sort of mentoring early on, during the first meetings with the council of the department, but although they felt, my colleagues felt that I was probably right to ask for some sort of mentoring, they did not feel that the department was probably prepared to offer.* (Lecturer - R4-U1D3-1)

His suggestion regarding the required support was not heard by his colleagues. He believed that his idea was ignored because senior colleagues had never taken any actions to enhance interaction between the faculty members. However, the insights that were gained from the literature indicated that mentoring is likely to influence positively the extent to which individuals adjust to a new environment by turning from outsiders to active members of the community (Feldman and Bolino 1999). Another lecturer (R18-U1D3-1) discussed in greater depth the existing lack of opportunities to practise and develop new skills which were related to his direct responsibilities. He viewed this as one of the most significant barriers to his development:

*I wish* an experienced member of the department came to my lectures and saw my performance, and we could discuss a bit on that part. [...] I was and still after one year and two months [...] I feel a bit insecure in my teaching. I do think that I need help and I will appreciate [it] but people are very busy. (Lecturer - R18-U1D3-1)

Lack of opportunities to get feedback on his performance when things went differently from what he expected, was perceived to be inappropriate to his development. His responses confirmed the findings of Garrow and Tawse (2009) regarding the value
respondents placed on guidance and support to new academics in order to be introduced to the accepted procedures and rules.

Commentaries of academics proved that the value which newcomers placed on getting support in disciplinary communities was unquestionable, since this could enhance their knowledge and skills and also facilitate their identity formation and commitment to what they did. They acknowledged the importance of induction as a required practice for their development regardless of their previous working experience.

5.3. Conclusion

The stories of academics included in this chapter gave insights into their participatory practices in academic CoPs. It has become evident that academics encountered different work-related situations in departmental contexts. Some of them described their high-involvement in work practices and colleagues that facilitated their positive learning outcomes. However, there were more instances when perceived isolation and limited involvement of academics in shared practices of their communities restricted their mutual meaning-making as a means of developing their shared accountability for results. Academics evidenced that most of their attempts to address this problem were ignored by ‘old-timers’. These findings contradicted the argument of Churchman and Stehlik (2007) who admitted that the entire process of informal sharing, development and diffusion of knowledge is embedded within tertiary institutions.

Novice academics did not always accept that contextual factors of their communities allowed them to be fully and equally engaged with work activities and thus to be developed into full participants. Even though informal learning was one of the most common methods of new knowledge and skills development, it was not always supported by the right conditions (including collaborative relationship with ‘old-timers’) and reified artifacts. Even though newcomers did well in learning multiple roles and new responsibilities, they so did with certain constraints and thus felt uncertain and isolated. This was because intuition rather than open communication and guidance from ‘old-timers’ (when dealing with unknown practices) prevailed. Analysis of academics’
narratives evidenced that both novice and experienced academics faced challenges of the transitional period towards full participation in their departmental communities.

Academics described weaknesses of a ‘restrictive’ working environment and expressed their interest in a more frequent interaction with their colleagues. In this respect they admitted the importance of mentoring as a significant contributor to their adjustment to a new place and development of their confidence in performance. Academics in my study commented upon the importance of looking into the means which facilitated learning activities between ‘old-timers’ and newcomers as central to the creation of an ‘expansive’ learning environment (Fuller and Unwin 2004; 2003). They brought to the fore the significant role of continual support for newcomers through both participation and use of reified artifacts that will engage newcomers in collaborative learning. This in turn, will provide access to the shared repertoire of the community (Tummons 2012).

To a large degree, my findings questioned the extent of reproduction of departmental communities because of the postponed intense involvement of novice academics within the academic life of CoPs. Academics explained that in order to support the origins of a CoP and contribute to its improvement, it was not enough to take all the responsibilities at the outset. Instead, they needed to be mutually engaged in negotiations of shared meaning with peers. That is why they expressed their desire to be better informed about the processes and practices embedded within their CoPs. Thus, this study brought to the fore the problematic nature of the reproduction cycle of some departmental communities in Cypriot public universities. This is because it was questionable how elder academics could encourage the continuity of CoPs if they did not provide the required support or even restricted learning experiences of newcomers.

Academics’ stories provided clues to the understanding that peripheral participation serves a powerful role in departmental communities in a sense that it might negatively influence the development of academics. This is because of the intentional ignorance by ‘old-timers’ who restrict newcomers access to central practices, exert power and control (Bryson et al. 2006) over their active involvement in community practices. This theme is further discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 6

Power relations between novice and ‘old-timer’ academics

6.1. Introduction

This chapter will explore the existing challenges regarding restricted individual autonomy and power inequalities between novices and ‘old-timers’ within academic CoPs. By looking at a number of factors that affected academics’ ‘learning territory’ (Fuller and Unwin 2004: 141), it can be argued that power inequalities between academics are significant to their participation and identity formation. Additionally, it is worth considering how power imbalances affect the negotiation of shared meanings between academics, and whether academics conformed to the requirements of their CoPs in order to be accepted (Garrow and Tawse 2009).

6.2. Power relations in an academic workplace

It was evident that power relations were influential for newcomers’ understanding of their membership and how they engage with each other and decide what practices to implement and in what ways (Wenger 1998). The lecturer (R2-U1D2-2) showed that power relations between ‘old-timers’ and newcomers shaped the engagement of novices in practices, due to exerted control over their initiatives:

[‘Old-timers’] have impacts on the newcomers, so those who are allocated as mentors, they need to stay as objective as possible and only limit themselves to information, rather than influence newcomers either academically or individually [...] because the newcomers will develop and they will create a career of their own, so it has to be done in a very very careful way because of
The above comment of the lecturer showed that novice academics faced difficulties when joining departments because of the powerful positions of ‘old-timers’ who directly affected the negotiation of shared meanings, making newcomers conform to the existing practices. Such experiences challenged Wenger’s (1998) views on peripheral participants as influential members in helping communities to be developed. In contrast, academics in the current study were restricted by ‘old-timers’ from the negotiation of meanings and values of a community (Bush er et al. 2007) that created conflicts between their constructed identities and the demands of the communities. Academics explained that such barriers shaped their learning practices and did not allow them to achieve the required results (Billett 2004). The special scientist (R1-U1D1-2) supported this view by describing her relationship with her mentor and indicating the tension between them, which was attributed to power inequalities:

[…] in the discussion [with my mentor], in my case she would tell you her opinion, you might discuss and end up with let’s say a common decision, [because] she would not hear you out. (Special scientist - R1-U1D1-2)

Here, there was a sign that ‘old-timers’ those who ‘hold disciplinary skills and knowledge’ (James 2007: 133) controlled access of a novice academic to central practices that disabled her peripheral participation (Hughes et al. 2007). However, when newcomers are forced to act in certain ways, this is likely to destabilise their sense of identity and disorient their position within a community (Busher and James 2015). Similarly, the lecturer (R4-U1D3-1) described how to survive in HE and admitted the tendency of novices to compromise with the established practices within CoPs. Indeed, in reality academics were forced to conform to the ideological aims in order to avoid any kind of punishment (Worthington and Hodgson 2005). In his story, the lecturer placed great emphasis on how to be easily accepted by the CoP and fit the norms of the workplace:

Newcomers are more flexible usually, or willing to change their opinion when they face resistance; not always but more frequently. I often do it. I often change my opinion if I find much resistance simply because I used to do this in the past
when I just came. I did not feel that it was a legitimate target of mine to change everything. (Lecturer - R4-U1D3-1)

His words explained how novice academics maintain a low-profile in the departmental community in order to avoid rejection by senior peers. His identification with the departmental community was weak since he did not participate in the negotiation of practices. With this in mind, another lecturer, when asked about her reflections on tenure-track positions in HE, explained how power inequality was exerted towards novices who were young and depended on more senior faculty. The commentary presented below gives an indication on this matter:

I do see this kind of professors who stop publishing for years and then they receive all the power and all the money when they have all these connections with politicians and then they have all these bunches of people working for them and at the end they do not put any word in any publication, but they keep publishing. (Lecturer - R8-U3D1-2)

She described the way in which ‘old-timers’ exploited newcomers. ‘Old-timers’ made a series of political decisions when choosing new members who could fit their agenda around identifiable practices (Hong and O 2009). Such experiences of academics challenged Wenger’s (1998) considerations on power flows within CoPs, by further elaborating on an unequal basis of the hierarchical distribution of power in departments (Bushen et. al. 2007) and how this influenced their development. Another lecturer (R10-U1D1-2) recalled the increasing pressure of ‘old-timers’ on young academics in terms of their workload:

There are times that you feel (especially [...] when you enter into a small committee) [...] you have to be really really convincing with many arguments, to show that you know what you are talking about. And many times in those kind of committees I heard that people might take much of responsibility [...] doing much of the work: “ok, you are the youngest and you can do that and that - and we will see how that proceeds, and let you know if it is fine” - and this has been experienced by two different colleagues. (Lecturer - R10-U1D1-2)

Instances such as these explained how ‘old-timers’ controlled ‘least powerful workers’ (Lave and Wenger 1991: 64) and restricted their access to central practices. Moreover,
the narratives of the interviewed academics exposed examples of discrimination towards novices. For example, the lecturer (R17-U2D1-2) protested against restricted acceptance by the community and exploitation from her colleagues. Her practices with experienced academics embed inequality and restricted participation. She described her difficult time and acknowledged that she was exploited by her colleagues:

Soon I realised [once joined the department] that there are politics, I was not with somebody. I did not have any person to protect me. [...] [The professor from the department] managed to influence negatively the promotion committee. I received a negative report, unsupported, with no evidence and a serious attempt was made by them to underestimate my work. [...] What they would have liked me to do is to shut my mouth, become a ‘good girl’ and do what they want me to do and then to move on as a slave in the academia. I grew up in a different environment. (Lecturer - R17-U2D1-2)

She described how her relationship with more experienced peers was built on unequal treatment, misapprehension and resistance. In response, she tried to keep distance from her colleagues since they restricted her access to the central practices which could have allowed her, otherwise, to be further developed. She was uncertain about her position within the department. The experience of the lecturer challenged the analytical framework of Wenger (1998) in relation to power imbalances since his explanation of the possible complexities of CoPs does not elaborate on discrimination and manipulation as mechanisms that shape interactions and development of the participants. Such circumstances were likely to create conflicting attitudes between newcomers and full participants, resulting in extended isolation of academics as well as ‘a breakdown of emotional and social ties’ (Hong and O 2009: 322). James (2007) described similar experiences of academics who ended up working at the edges of their communities. Similar findings by Garrow and Tawse (2009) described examples of limited participation of new academics due to restricted or denied access to the community.

The following comment of the associate professor (R19-U1D3-2) was also about power inequalities between academics. She indicated that this issue bothered her and had an impact on her limited access to tangible and intangible resources within the department. What was interesting is that she was one of the oldest members of the department (she
had been working for more than 15 years). Despite this fact, she experienced unequal treatment from the side of her male colleagues:

_Here [in the department] there is sex imbalance, gender imbalance is around, which means that power lies [...] with male population and the way they put the criteria and the way they decide and so, the needs and interests of women are not always there. So I think in academia we need to look at this issue: the gender imbalance._ (Associate professor - R19-U1D3-2)

However, participation in the decision-making process is necessary for developing ‘a shared repertoire of knowledge over time’ (Albrecht 2012: 274). The words of the associate professor (R19-U1D3-2) coincided with the findings of Thomas and Davies (2002) who explained that new-managerialist practices influence experiences of women in academia making them ‘marginalized’ within HEIs.

The stories of academics revealed more examples of power inequalities that added insights into Wenger’s (1998) explanation of the role of power in communities. For instance, the assistant professor (R13-U3D1-2) admitted that HE was getting out of touch with the world outside. She acknowledged that identities of academics who would like to ‘be good soldiers for their progress’ were shaped by ‘some gatekeepers’ who treated them under constant surveillance. She described how the wider dynamic context of HE influenced academics’ participation and their development. She did not agree with what was happening in HE, where academics became members of ‘countable’ ways of working without being interfered with social problems on a larger scale. In the following commentary she provided an example of how academics faced undue obligations:

_It is important for us to publish in ‘good’ journals. [...] I mean a journal that someone has decided to count as a good journal. These journals are English or American journals, so we have to write in a language which is not our language. [...] What about the Greek language, Russian, French? [...] Language is part of our culture; I do not want to leave apart [...] from our identity, of our expression in order to be a good soldier for my progress. [...] We should find some solutions in order not to give the power to some gatekeepers in the academia and to continue to play this powerful game._ (Assistant professor - R13-U3D1-2)
Commentaries such as these indicated that the external control in HE caused tensions between academics (James 2007; Coaldrake and Stedman 1999):

You are judged by international kind of contribution of research, so this is kind of expectation that you set up to. Clearly there are politics in the departments and at the universities in terms of how this is married and the contribution is judged. (Associate professor - R6-U2D1-1)

The associate professor (R6-U2D1-1) explained how a reified formal power of the system influenced academics’ negotiation of professional values (Busher et al. 2007). He showed that academics are affected by the imposed requirements towards the production of a certain number of publications and research projects.

Another lecturer (R12-U2D3-1) also indicated that the power of his peers could influence the acceptance of his work in front of the evaluation committees. He admitted the importance of developing good relationship with some ‘powerful peers’ who had the final word in the evaluation process that could be a governing principle for his progression. In other words, he indicated that core members had greater authority to control the outcomes of negotiations and influence decisions (Busher et al. 2007). Such views added important insights into Wenger’s (1998) interpretation of power:

If you want to be successful, you need to find a way to ensure that your peers are satisfied with your performance. And since your peers are also academics, and if they value research more, then you need to worry about the research. If they value teaching more, [...] then you need to worry about teaching. So you need to worry about your peers and this is how you get along. [...] Then you need to kind of adapt [...] your style of research and writing even if that does not necessary make you happy. [...] [Thus], publishing a lot of papers, none of them being really important or groundbreaking. (Lecturer-R12-U2D3-1)

He explained that the chances to be published were increased if an academic supported opinion of those who were in an evaluation committee, thus adapting rather than discovering and developing new perspectives, that, in turn, constrained their learning experiences (Contu and Willmot 2003). Later, he also explained how the evaluation committees indirectly influenced academics’ working priorities by restricting curricula and their workload:
We would first be judged based on our research output or the research potential or gathering funding from agencies, and they [evaluation committees] would just consider teaching as secondary. I am not saying that they are doing the right thing. So if someone wants to be successful in academia, I would say they have to please the evaluation committees and they have to be refocusing mostly on research, perhaps at the expense of other pillars of being an academic. (Lecturer - R12-U2D3-1)

Similarly, another academic focused mostly on restrictions which were facilitated by the institutional politics that affected academics’ performance and their behaviour on a daily basis:

*The system of rewards [which has been set up] in accordance with the system of accomplishments [...] broke. [...] [Academics] do not have bargaining options. The institution has all the power and the power within the institution is political. So they can do whatever they want because you do not have alternatives.*

(Associate professor - R7-U1D3-1)

Another theme which was revealed by the academics was related to disagreements, challenges, and competition within CoPs (Wenger 1998: 77). In Wenger’s explanation (1998), conflicts and competition enhance commitment of participants even more than their passive conformity does. However, he did not explain how plurality created ambiguous and conflicting situations among the participants. My study though showed the negative influences of plurality, disagreements and fights on academics’ practices. For example, the associate professor (R7-U1D3-1) admitted that his department greatly suffered from plurality and explained its disruptive side when searching for a common ground across differences. He spoke of reasons for this to happen and how these differences caused unfavorable results:

*Plurality is horrible, because there is no common denominator. People need to have common frames of reference. You cannot have a meaningful discussion on discipline when [...] they do not have any coherence. If you add to this the fact that you need to have some kind of consensus that is going to be built thematically or in terms of discipline, it will become a kind of ideological, kind of political non-equilibrium.* (Associate professor R7-U1D3-1)
Even though the professor (R5-U2D1-1) explained the necessity of developing a common language and setting consistent objectives in order to cultivate an academic practice, he expressed his concerns about plurality, especially when academics needed to find a common understanding:

*The plurality is good when you discuss, what is bad when you really need to find your own common language in which to discuss and understand each other. That we found very difficult and it is still [...], but I think it is good, because in this way we are enriched [the system of doing things].* (Professor - R5-U2D1-1)

Similarly, the lecturer (R12-U2D3-1) exposed how plurality could have ideally influenced the learning processes of academics, but he admitted that such outcomes were unlikely to happen in reality:

*It is important to have [...] opinions from outside. Unfortunately, what happens is that plurality does not work in this ideal form. Instead, I say ‘A’, but I do not have the means to kind of push my argument to the higher ladder of the hierarchy, in administrative hierarchy to be heard. Whereas someone says ‘B’ and because of whatever reason, they can get these arguments heard, [...] they can get their thing, their opinion be validated or accepted, irrespectively [...] whether it was better opinion or a more solid opinion, or a better argument, but just because they had the means to get to where the decisions are made.* (Lecturer - R12-U2D3-1)

Even though the above comments showed that plurality could encourage a mutual collaboration between members, in reality plurality was mostly associated with conflicting episodes that caused isolation of some members. These tensions were created as an inevitable result of a combination of different needs and perspectives in small-sized communities that contradicts the argument of Curral *et.al.* (2001) regarding variations in motives and values.

What is interesting though is that there were some comments of academics which supported the argument of Wenger *et al.* (2009) regarding the possibility of collective learning due to diversity and disagreements. The lecturer similarly considered plurality as a certain challenge that if managed properly, will bring positive results and will lead to a compromise:
I do not have any problem with plurality. It helps, but at the same time I know it creates a lot of difficulties (which is not an amount), but there are compromising solutions like I have achieved, so it is not something that cannot be happening. […] We may argue a lot, we may have meetings and argue for hours and hours and then we may fight, and then it is gone. And I think that it is a very direct communication we have. We sort of want to do the best for us in our department which is not such a big department. (Lecturer - R8-U3D1-2)

Her words coincided with the findings of Otten (2009) who argued for the importance of diversity within a community in terms of its ‘social composition’. However, the development of a coherent mission through a dialogue at a common table is vital for better outcomes when facing diversity (Otten 2009). Likewise, the professor (R20-U1D2-1) reflected on his experiences of having laborious and time-consuming discussions because of plurality, when academics from different backgrounds came together in order to set up the department. However, he accepted that the outcome of all ‘fights’ between colleagues brought also positive results for the development of their department.

Given that the impetus of plurality and diversity was experienced by academics, my findings did not indicate many differences in their responses on this issue. The main concern of academics was on how to nurture a constructive dialogue in order to develop a common understanding and thus, avoid the situation when power relations were unfolded. As a result, their experiences of plurality did not always bring negative results to the dynamics of a group and access to resources.

6.3. Access to resources within academic CoPs

The issue of access to resources within academic CoPs, which was perceived by academics as valuable and necessary for their career development, was integrally linked with the discussion about power inequalities. Based on the responses of the academics, a few categories of resources, which were required for their career progression in HE,
were identified. These were related to the various community issues and difficulties in balancing their career prospects with job requirements. One of the associate professors (R16-U2D4-1) commented upon what young academics should pay attention to, in order to enhance their development. His observation of his progression at the beginning of his career ladder showed the critical importance of the right environment (the right peers, supervisor or mentor, and the place):

\textit{It does not help if your own abilities are sufficient enough. At the beginning you are at a stage when you need directions, you need essential people that you can rely on. You need access to facilities, labs, libraries, everything that a modern and good university should offer.} (Associate professor - R16-U2D4-1)

By saying this, he acknowledged that career development cannot be governed only by what you know and what you can do. The setting should provide an appropriate support and assist academics in meeting the demands of a contemporary academic environment. His views were similar to what the lecturer (R10-U1D1-2) recognised as an integral part of her career development. The initiatives towards building one’s own learning network by considering people who can support you, guide you, and give you the benefit of their time, knowledge and experience were admitted:

\textit{[There is a need to pay attention to] networking within the department and also people who are doing similar stuff in the broader area, maybe European area and maybe even at the international level. This is how I feel like, I mean if you have to work, you have to have networks, people who do similar stuff, and also have some kind of network to use [...] [in order to] support [you] when applying for grants.} (Lecturer - R10-U1D1-2)

She initiated her participation with others due to lack of access to relevant sources that obstructed her work. Her experience added additional evidence about the importance of multiple membership (Wenger 1998). This is because the flows of power exerted by core members in her departmental community (in terms of restricted access to central practices), affected her identity construction which was enabled through her wider participation in a number of formal and informal emerging communities, including graduate students and research assistants. She credited the support of students for helping her to manage different job requirements:
I keep trying to develop a kind of culture among some students who feel like they are interested in things I am doing and help them, see the connection about their own work and my work and [...] to create some networks among students and myself. So that they can learn from what I am doing, but also I can have them to support what I am doing. (Lecturer - R10-U1D1-2)

She believed that a joint vision towards a common result was a great driving force for a mutual learning process. However, one of the problems of such collective actions was related to trust between the participants regarding the creation of effective networks. She considered networking activities as critical in HE since they allowed her to get to know those who have power to influence her progression:

The realistic answer: personal acquaintances, people who need to know your work, the access to people who are at key positions. (Lecturer - R10-U1D1-2)

At the end of the interview she came up with the alternatives that could help her be more productive at work, besides the support of her peers. At this point she emphasised the significant role of a sabbatical leave for novice academics. She argued that a permission for a sabbatical leave contradicted the logic of career progression at the beginning of a tenure track. She could benefit from a sabbatical leave at this point of her career by getting experience from additional research and networking that could have helped her grow in many ways. Most importantly, this could provide her opportunities for reflection on her research outputs that would be helpful during the process of appraisal. Otherwise time ran against her. She explained her point adding the following:

To get a sabbatical you have to spend at least three years as a full-timer, doing your work full time, and then you can apply for one semester of sabbatical. Otherwise you can apply for the whole year after seven years of full work in a way. But if there was time within the first three years to get some time for research purposes, that would be something that would support much. (Lecturer - R10-U1D1-2)

Another lecturer (R18-U1D3-1) similarly recognised the influential role of networking as crucial to his development since it could facilitate personal acquaintances and provide a valuable access to financial resources:
Networking is essential to find funding, because you are applying to these organisations that send proposals to academics. So if they know who you are, even if the subject is a bit off, because they know you and they know what you can do, then you can get a high mark. If they do not know who you are - they will say ‘too ambitious’ – ‘this is not important for us’. That is why it is important to go to conferences. Publications are not so important to get funding but they are important for people to know you and to get a job. (Lecturer - R18-U1D3-1)

Another point of view regarding necessary resources was provided by the special scientist (R9-U3D1-1) who admitted that without financial support there were limited chances to progress, no matter how hard he worked. He expressed his concern regarding the cost of unnecessary efforts to save money that negatively influenced the integrity of his scientific work:

 [...] instead of using my knowledge to administer things, inevitably I will waste, not waste but spend most of the time doing things that someone with not even a certificate can do. So you need financial support, it is the most important. (Special scientist - R9-U3D1-1)

The associate professor (R7-U1D3-1) commented upon the importance of funds:

My research budget was more than 5000 euros and that was enough to be able to spend money to go to conferences, have various activities. And right now this is being reduced to practically nil. So this affects those of us who want to keep working actually being able to do our job, because we have to pay out of our pocket and we have our salaries being reduced from 20 to 40%, so we cannot do that. And unless you get invitations [paid invitations], there is very little you can do. (Associate professor - R7-U1D3-1)

Similarly, some other academics commented upon the necessity of having access to funds as a significant resource when considering career progression. However, at the time of conducting my research, spending cuts were introduced as a result of economic instability in the country that negatively influenced the academic life in Cypriot public HEIs.
6.4. Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that the issue of power and access to resources are central to the discussion about the development of academics. There were cases when ‘old-timers’ intentionally influenced the processes through which newcomers learnt by restricting their access to the shared repertoire of practices. It is worth mentioning that this was not just about the power of knowledge and experience, but about the hierarchal distribution of power that influenced access to the central practices of CoPs. Newcomers commented upon the situations when ‘old-timers’ control the outcomes of negotiations during formal meetings and therefore novices were forced to align their opinion with the predetermined decisions. This, in turn, affected the ways in which newcomers and ‘old-timers’ interacted with each other.

Moreover, those academics who encountered the boundaries of multiple CoPs were ignored by ‘old-timers’ and thus experienced difficulties when joining a department. They remained marginal to a relevant disciplinary community that, in turn, restricted their development into full members. They considered the existing ignorance by ‘old-timers’ as a political decision to control access to the central practices of a CoP. These academics evidenced that perceived tensions limited their opportunities to negotiate a repertoire of agreed practices and meanings that negatively influenced their subsequent learning experiences (Fuller et al. 2005). As a result, these academics were kept outside from a shared repertoire of successful practices. This means that their identification with a given departmental community was likely to be weaker compared to other CoPs where they kept their core positions. Moreover, academics commented upon the existing influences of the wider dynamic context of HE, including the external control as a response to new managerialism, on their identity formation, their forms of participation and access to resources.

The findings of my research showed that conflicts and disagreements varied in the level of escalation and content that directly affected participatory practices within CoPs and restricted autonomy of academics (Musselin 2005). Additionally, they revealed the importance and the role of gatekeepers, networking and financial support as the required resources for their career progression in HE. Their words coincided with the findings of Fuller and Unwin (2003) who admitted that those individuals who have no access to
underpinning knowledge, face barriers to learning and development. Since career development in HE cannot be fully understood without opening up the discussion about the transformed nature of HEIs, the next section will present insights into the changes in academic workplaces as perceived by academics.
Chapter 7

Transforming the academic workplace (Theme 2)

7.1. Introduction

Given that we know little about how academics perceive and navigate their careers in changing conditions in HE (McAlpine 2012), special attention in this chapter is placed on the existing tension between academics’ obligations towards HEIs. This section presents the second theme, by elaborating on the two sub-themes which emerged through the data analysis. The sub-themes are (1) academic roles and career in higher education and (2) insights into academic employment relationship and determinants of academic career success.

This chapter signposted that academics in Cypriot HE experienced the impacts of new managerialism on their identity formation. Although it is hard to imagine how HEIs can be operated as factories, commentators describe ‘commodification’ of academic work (De Groot 1997). That is why, there is a need of more European comparative research studies on such changes in HE, including Cypriot HE, with a more strategic perspective in terms of the required support to academics’ career development.

7.2. Academic roles and career in higher education

Academics in my study were asked about their roles, the interpretations of which were derived from the stories about their career turning points. However, once academics were asked to reflect on their perceptions, in most of the cases it took them some time to describe their views. Most of them faced difficulties in explaining the meaning of what it means to be an academic and some of them were unable to explain who is an academic. This showed that academics experienced uncertainties in self-identification in
the current working conditions. However, in a related vein, the literature is relatively silent about the influences of the social dimension of academic CoPs on academics’ perceptions of their roles (Kyvik 2013). Thus, in my view the tendency for isolation experienced by academics in their departmental communities (based on evidence of the previous chapters) influenced their perceptions of their career prospects, their roles in HE and academic identity. Similar to Bansel (2011) who described the changes of academic work outputs which turned to have financial returns, the current study depicted the role of intense institutional tensions that undermine academic roles.

For the assistant professor (R13-U3D1-2) ‘an academic’ is someone who takes an active role in society. She showed that her professional interests were linked with the contribution to the public good, supporting the knowledge transfer rather than ‘fighting’ for a better position being ‘obliged to quantify everything’. In her view, academics should disseminate knowledge and bring this to the forefront, thus contributing not only to their own interests and development but also to the public good. She described her experience as follows:

_I want, as an academic, to have a good connection with the society. This is the thing that is the most important in my career. I do not want to be an academic who is working on the projects and, none of these projects work in a therapeutic way to the society. I want my projects to give the opportunity to the society, to give some things in order to improve the human being. This is for me the most important. If I lose this, I do not think I have a lot in academia [...] Our mission is not to fight, but to understand his or her way in the society._ (Assistant professor - R13-U3D1-2)

She expressed her concerns about maintaining her position by trying to compromise between practices she was obliged to do. She felt pressure to contribute to research activity without considering it as part of her academic identity (Boyd 2010). As a result, she tried to keep balance and continue spending time on research she was interested in. Her words coincided with the findings of Kyvik (2013) who admitted that academics struggle to balance their research commitments, by managing conflicting obligations and the demands for external funding. Such views explain that in applying Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concept of CoP and Wenger’s (1998) explanation of the notion of power to HE, attention should be given to the wider context in which academics operate.
and how it influences their participatory practices and identity construction. For example, the assistant professor (R13-U3D1-2) described her worries on the perceived imbalance between her research agenda. She was very interested in working on a specific project that did not fit to the requirements of her role in the department:

*I am working in specific projects in order to publish in specific journals in order to progress, and working in specific projects because I like to work on. But it means more time for the job. This is the only one solution that I can find. For example, I have a project now. [...] We are planning to publish a book. This book is going to be published in Greek, and this is not going to count in my progress, but this is something I am really interested to investigate, so I am doing it.* (Assistant professor - R13-U3D1-2)

Here again, she described what she did in order to find time to be simultaneously active in the university and the society. The concluding remarks of Teelken (2012: 287) were of a similar nature regarding some academics who compromise with ‘stressful obligations’. In this respect, the assistant professor (R13-U3D1-2) explained her uncertainty regarding the existing roles of academics nowadays:

*[There are] two kinds of academics: the ones who work by the book, and thus they are good workers, but not good thinkers; they are working just like workers in a factory. And there are academics who are more cultured and [...] take part in and have an opinion for the society.* (Assistant professor - R13-U3D1-2)

We can see that even though she stressed the importance of being an active participant in society, at the same time she acknowledged the existing barriers to achieve this due to the existing imbalance between tasks. According to her opinion, this negatively influenced the main role of academics as the providers of knowledge to the public good:

*We are working too much in administrative things at the University, we are working too much for lectures every day and we do not have enough time even to read a book to improve our way of thinking. I think our role [...] is to have an active role in the society as well, not to be closed just in our offices and just to produce things: to publish in journals and to continue our life without being active members of the society.* (Assistant professor - R13-U3D1-2)
Moreover, she noted that academics are influenced by the obligations and strict commitment to the formal procedures within the University. The assistant professor (R13-U3D1-2) was worried about her autonomy to produce and develop her academic work, which was significantly reduced (Musselin 2005). She supported her argument by the following:

*New academics are affected mostly, because the older academics were not used to work in such methodological way; that is why they had an opportunity to write the great theories and improve the great theories. Their role was different to our role. They had an opportunity to see things and to improve theories like intellectuals, we are not intellectuals. We are members of a factory.* (Assistant professor - R13-U3D1-2)

She was concerned with the increased restrictions placed on academics in terms of their research outputs. She felt uncomfortable to lose a continuous contact with the society, since this connection made sense for her to stay in HE:

*For me, the most important thing is to have the opportunity to pass knowledge or to contact the society and to give the opportunity to the society to be close to academia. We have to work together, the society and the University.* (Assistant professor - R13-U3D1-2)

Her story caused my interest since such initiatives were admitted by other academics as well. For example, the lecturer (R17-U2D1-2) noted that her connection with the society made sense for her role:

*You do not develop knowledge for yourself, for your CV, for the promotion committee. You are a scholar but then you have to be able to transfer this, to be in touch with your students.* (Lecturer - R17-U2D1-2)

By saying this, she stressed the unique role of academics in enabling the society to advance its sustainable development. Similarly, another academic admitted the importance of making connections across different research fields, being in a position to be committed to the society:

*[An academic is] an open-minded person, who aims to improve the quality of life and the public and to discover things for that purpose, and someone who is devoted to do research.* (Associate professor - R14-U3D1-1)
Another lecturer (R10-U1D1-2) commented on the role of an academic in supporting knowledge transfer by being able to inspire people:

*The role of an academic is* mostly about seeking knowledge in your area, supporting people to see that knowledge and understand that knowledge and being able to communicate that knowledge. (Lecturer- R10-U1D1-2)

More academics commented upon their obligations towards citizens. Some of them reflected that once employed in universities they needed to prove not just to themselves but to society at first that they worth the money of tax payers. This reflected a long discussion of the professor regarding the balance between the benefits academics were getting and their input into the society:

*You are always judged on the level of your research primarily and then on the level of how good teacher you are, and you know that from the beginning. Therefore, there is added pressure, but I do not find it negative, because especially in a [...] society of shrinking resources I think that we should be able to prove that we worth the money that tax payers are giving.* (Professor - R5-U2D1-1)

The views of academics on their roles in HE and the dynamics of the marketplace (Musselin 2005) should be recounted further, by gaining insights into their employment relationship within HE, since this has a direct impact on academics’ forms of participation as well as the nature and boundaries of academic CoPs.

### 7.3. Insights into academic employment relationship and determinants of academic career success

This section will bring to the fore the worries of academics regarding their professional future by accepting the prevailing dynamics in the academic world of Cyprus. The existing changes within academic employment relations are well captured as follows:

*Universities are* “no longer viewed as ivory towers of intellectual pursuits and truthful thoughts, but rather as enterprises driven by arrogant individuals out to capture as much money and influence as possible” (Sharp 1994: 148).
In the current research academics showed how the above mentioned changes have become the norm that influenced their career prospects. One of the academics noted the difficulties of pursuing an academic career nowadays, due to unstable economic conditions and increased managerial measures imposed upon them. He accepted that academic tenure-track positions were hard to break into, due to competition and lack of support from universities:

Now [...] the main trend actually is to get people, to get cheap labour, the people with PhD to teach three courses and to go away. No real position, no real commitment, research only at the basis of the research program. So again you are going to work as a cheap labor in the project and, then to go away. Of course, no things like: tenure, because tenure costs money, you have to be paid for holidays and then you have to have a medical cover. These things cost. I mean this is the change, so it is extremely difficult to find a job. (Associate professor - R3-U1D2-1)

He continued reflecting on the existing uncertainty or even instability of academic career paths that was likely to have a negative impact on science. He supported his argument by saying the following:

Now [it is] much harder to get into academic career and you need to work hard, because positions become fewer, departments implode, schools shut down, because of this newly liberal managerial attitude. (Associate professor - R3-U1D2-1)

He added that loyalty to HEIs among academics was reduced that led to a situation where academics were not willing to speak out their ideas but just work under the strain of the system. Later, he made a comparison of working processes between universities and ‘factories’ by admitting similarities in functioning:

I think this is a disaster, because you cannot run the university the way you run the factory: keep costs low or rise prices, make quality as much as necessary so that we can appear in a particular, you know, niche market. That is how the university should not work. It used to be bad, now it is worse. The main idea which is spreading out [...] is that you can run a university the way you run a factory or supermarkets - the managerial approach to education. (Associate professor - R3-U1D2-1)
He acknowledged that if universities will continue working in such a rhythm, this will inevitably disconnect academic work with the creation and diffusion of knowledge on the basis of merits:

*The University wants to make money from [academics], which means either to attract funds or to do something that is going to create publicity of the University. [...] People go to the institutions because of the debate you create or because you create name for yourself; [...] they want you to draw a lot of projects to bring money because for every project someone gets in the University a cheque. [...] So, you work not just on the basis of merits and good research work but on the basis of competition.* (Associate professor - R3-U1D2-1)

His reflections on the problems in his departmental community made him focused on the discussion about funding shortfalls. According to his point of view, such circumstances put academics in a position that did not allow them to expect any subsequent financial support from institutions, but instead being threatened to be judged and replaced:

*When you are actually good at the University, even if you are 'a big fish in a small pond', there is no guarantee that they are going to keep you.* (Associate professor - R3-U1D2-1)

He attempted to explain the fact that academics were becoming more and more reluctant to express their opinion and expose themselves, since there was a possibility to become marginalised if they did not conform to the required views. A very direct response of the lecturer on this matter was as follows: *You have to publish, because [otherwise] you are fired.* (Lecturer - R4-U1D3-1)

Additionally, the associate professor (R3-U1D2-1) admitted that his participation in departmental practices became associated with the requirements of new managerialism that is problematic for his development as an academic. He explained the increasing gap between teaching and research by emphasising the increased student intake (Deem 2006):

*Administration wants big audiences because they cost less. The thing is to have big audiences in a particular type of courses [means that] teaching drops, which means that students’ satisfaction drops, and if you measure everything by*
customer satisfaction - this means that even on the managerial way you are damaging the company. (Associate professor - R3-U1D2-1)

Smith and Rust (2011) also described the existing gap between research and teaching that underpins the nature of academic life nowadays. Similar experiences and thoughts were shared by another associate professor (R7-U1D3-1) who admitted that due to the reorganisation of institutional structures, academics lost their exclusive rights to produce valuable knowledge:

_We increasingly hire the people that some people prefer, and not the best people. That is a recipe for the declining performance of the University and for the transformation of the University to a peripheral University in an educational system which is, unfortunately, where we are going to be in a decade, perhaps even less than in a decade._ (Associate professor - R7-U1D3-1)

He continued on revealing that academics were affected by organisational practices which were developed by executives who kept a firm grip on academics (Bleiklie and Kogan 2007). This adds important insights into Wenger’s (1998) explanation of power, since the associate professor described a deeper influence of formally ascribed power within the HEI on the selection of the repertoire of practice within his community as well as its associated values (Bush et al. 2007). This, in turn, subsequently affects academics’ sense of belonging. As a result, he questioned his role in HE:

_Now academics become something between administrators and managers, [who are] decreasingly being able to create new ideas. They are not necessarily of the best caliber._ (Associate professor - R7-U1D3-1)

The words of the lecturer (R2-U1D2-2) were in line with the expressed participants’ worries about uncertainty of how to secure their employment due to economic problems in the country. She admitted that she joined the University at a critical time. That is why the management team of the University was very demanding:

_You do not know what is going to happen with your upgrade, for instance, if you will be upgraded or you will be fired or if you are going to keep the same salary you used to get. [...] We do not know what is going to happen with our research budget (we get a little bit money to go to conferences abroad every year), so we_
do not know whether we are going to get this money this coming year. So we are now facing uneasiness. (Lecturer - R2-U1D2-2)

She was concerned with the added administrative pressure and how this negatively affected a sense of her academic identity and forms of participation:

The balance has been changed: we do teaching, we have some admin work, but research obligations are a lot more than it used to be. So admin work gets on the way of research and publications. So for example, I would come in the morning sometimes and I would have students queuing outside my office for reference letters, for advice [...], so there goes my day. When can I do my research? And when we go to the process of upgrading from one rank to another, the requirements are really much more demanding than they used to be. (Lecturer - R2-U1D2-2)

She expressed her worries about a combination of overlapping practices she experienced in her departmental community and questioned the focus of academic work that has become centered on research income-generating activities (Davies and Thomas 2002). Indeed, academic work is structured in line with the institutional interests, drawing on commercial importance of the research results rather than individual interests of academics (Bleiklie and Kogan 2007). One of the lecturers (R17-U2D1-2) admitted that such restrictions should not be waived from a serious consideration, since they shape the way in which academics perceive themselves, resulting in their insecurity:

When you work under pressure in order to produce because you have to produce – this is against the quality [...]. I think all this fuss about getting funded, getting published - what creates is competition, and this is not healthy in the academia and creates people who are very stressed. (Lecturer - R17-U2D1-2)

Thus, she admitted that a long-term exposure to such practices creates unhealthy competition between academics that causes ‘a community disorder’ in response to ‘myopic pressures’ (Wenger et al. 2002: 156) by the management of HEIs. The following commentaries of the associate professor showed how continuous pressure upon academics undermined the quality of social interaction with colleagues that caused drawbacks in their performance:
Things have been changed in higher education [...] [and these changes are mostly] related to finances. [...] I see people and myself under continuous pressure and doing too many things at the same time, so just cutting down on social aspects of work. (Associate professor - R16-U2D4-1)

This is supported by the findings of Warhurst (2008: 459) who acknowledged that where there is absence of workplace interactions, there is potential for negative effects on the ‘collective meaning-making’ process derived from participatory experiences. By accepting the changes in his working agenda, the associate professor (R16-U2D4-1) was very emotional when describing the nature of his work by making direct associations with the process of ‘selling a product’:

This is not only education anymore, it is about unfortunately, also selling a product, [...] [as well as about] how to attract students, and the tendency is to push researchers (in a good way) to attract external funding which will provide not only funding for researchers, but also [...] [can] cover some other expenses. (Associate professor - R16-U2D4-1)

Later, he also agreed that in order to secure a position in HE, a healthy dose of financial support was required beside his hard work and desire to develop his academic career. He commented on his experiences of being increasingly relied on himself since he could not expect to receive any support from his University anymore:

It is nothing to hide that better the university is usually better your peers, better your own outcome, better people you can attract, plus funding, obviously. So funding will go usually [...] where money is, the funding will go exactly where the reputation is, good researchers will go where the reputation is, and to be honest, I do not have any illusions here: we are a very new University to attract these people, so this is also an obstacle to these kind of things. And this is not just myself; any researcher with aspirations to do research has found him/herself across this kind of problems in new universities. (Associate professor - R16-U2D4-1)

His comments showed that managerial measures applied in HEIs are perceived to be irrational to the nature of academic work in terms of knowledge creation:
I understand that we are running difficult times, general financial crisis in Europe and globally, but we have to go back to basics and remember what was education all about. Education was not having anything to do with money; particularly in the University sector. It was about sort of preparing [...] citizens of tomorrow, it is about giving them these skills, not just professionally but also to have the ability intellectually to think and react to the situation. (Associate professor - R16-U2D4-1)

In fact, he supported the argument pursued by Wenger et al. (2002: 155-156) who asserted that a ‘short-term focus on tangible outcomes’ is encountered as a barrier to learning and generation of knowledge. The associate professor (R16-U2D4-1) provided evidence of the patterns of publishing and researching agenda that were directly derived from the obligations of academic establishments:

*It is all becoming about money or research-income generation. Increasingly, funding is directed towards certain aspects, and research certainly is directed towards certain aspects and, therefore, your products will be very very specific.*

(Associate professor - R16-U2D4-1)

He was frequently describing the changing research agenda. As such, he admitted the value of financial resources and the availability of receiving funding from the authorities:

*Priorities change, and researchers if they want to get funding, they are actually asked in a way to adapt their research agenda. And sometimes I find that this research agenda is getting narrow and narrow which actually contradicts the concept of research itself.* (Associate professor - R16-U2D4-1)

His words supported the findings of Leathwood and Read (2005) who admitted that academics experience more difficulties in taking risk in their research activities. Thus, the associate professor (R16-U2D4-1) acknowledged the disproportional gap between teaching and administrative practices within disciplinary communities and criticised the actual interest of the University which was allied with financial benefits:

*I find myself losing endless time doing administrative chores […], trying to set procedures and understand things, how things work and try to do much more. […] I think this means only one thing […] – research-income generation,
because they obviously expect that. I am afraid that they are missing the point by strictly looking at monetary values; [...] we as academics at times (I found also myself doing it at times; obviously not always) neglect the teaching quality at the expense of preparing for a grant, preparing a publication, chasing people around for funding. (Associate professor - R16-U2D4-1)

In the above commentary he admitted that sometimes he had to ‘neglect the teaching quality’ since this was required by the system. He explained that this experience could not facilitate the development of academics. That is why when concluding his observations of the current situation he expressed his skepticism regarding the future of HE if the development was going to be kept in a similar pace. He added that this will destroy even more the relationship between teaching and research due to competitive strategies pursued by academic establishments (Coate et al. 2001):

*Research has to be as applied as possible; [...] it has to be a part of the society not away from the society. The most immediate way to do it is to transfer what you do, to transfer the results – just to teach. That is why I am very sort of reluctant when I hear when the University, rather skeptical, when Universities are trying to impose people what to do on the basis of the record.* (Associate professor - R16-U2D4-1)

He brought to the fore the complexity of academic practices and considered this as a significant problem to the development of academic identity, in particular, a sense of their autonomy. Similar ideas regarding academic practices which were less allied with academics’ individual autonomy are found in the study of Musselin (2005). It became more difficult for academics to experience independence in the way they pursue their research activities:

*I think academia and the University belong to this kind of crisis in a sense that you see that [...] teaching is underestimated more and more, [...]. However, the way things are going financially now, and more we become dependent on students’ money, we have to bring back teaching quality.* (Associate professor - R16-U2D4-1).

By saying this, he presented alternative views to the theoretical perspectives of Fossey and Wood (2004) regarding the concept of academic freedom as an inevitable right of
scholars to pursue their academic work. The following extract explains pragmatic interests of a managerial team of the educational institution towards academics:

The University actually, [...] and the department expect from all of us that we build career locally and internationally. [...] So more recognised internationally you are, better things will be for you, job wise. (Lecturer - R2-U1D2-2)

The lecturer explained that academics in a sense were forced to join different communities outside their institutions in order to make contributions by which the name of their University was heard at the international level. In other words, she was influenced by those academics who had greater authority to control the resources she required to sustain her position in her disciplinary community. Such views challenge Wenger’s (1998) considerations on power inequalities and expand our understanding of the existing influences of authorities who exert power linked to formal organisational processes (Bushel et al. 2007). The lecturer indicated her negative attitude towards such preset outcomes, when performing what was required instead of doing her work as ‘a source of self-expression and pleasure’ (Bansel 2011: 548). This experience negatively affected her sense of academic identity. In the following comment other details on this matter were added:

We have to produce continuously. We cannot stop, because we need to be upgraded and this is the system that forces us. (Lecturer - R2-U1D2-2)

It is also shown in the literature that academics experience a gradual loss of their professional autonomy (Musselin 2005) due to the increased control over efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity of their work (Davies and Thomas 2002). The findings of Winefield (2002 cited in Gelade 1997: 22) explained that academics experience an increased pressure from compulsory tasks at the expense of their academic interests.

In the context of the discussion with the assistant professor (R13-U3D1-2) on whether academics should conform to the formal rules of universities, she expressed her worries about the essential obligations for a continuous upgrade based on existing HR regulations. Such experiences challenge the CoP framework (Wenger 1998) for its lack of clarity on the influences of the flows of power between a CoP and its constellation on their members. In contrast, the assistant professor explained how the mismatch between
the demands of her disciplinary community and the University negatively shaped her academic identity:

In Greek Universities we are able to decide about the way and the time we feel ready to continue. Here, in Cyprus things are different. For me after 3 years, the HR will send a letter and they will inform you, that now, after three years I am obliged to continue for my progress. So, we have it in our minds: this is part of my obligation, so as part of obligation I have to work in that way. If I were in Greece, I do not think that I would be very interested in continuing in a very fast way. But, of course, if you are in the institution, it is important not to fail in these exams. (Assistant professor - R13-U3D1-2)

She did not agree with such rules, since the decision on whether an academic wants to continue to be upgraded is likely to be a personal matter rather than an organisational issue. She was disappointed about the existing obligations to produce in order to comply with an enforced ranking system, since this limits her autonomy. Such experiences challenge Wenger’s (1998) theorisation of power since he did not explain adequately how the wider dynamic institutional context can shape practices and identities of the participants. In contrast, the assistant professor (R13-U3D1-2) admitted that academics purposively needed to quantify their work and to constantly produce. Such an external control became significant in determining academics’ forms of participation and their practices:

We have to do our research; we are obliged to find time to publish, because when the time comes for progression they will ask us: ‘how many publications?’ They will count, because this is something we can count (in which journals etc). We have to work in that way. We are obliged to quantify everything. This is not the way to work actually, but I have to do it. (Assistant professor - R13-U3D1-2)

She provided a highly significant insight into what went wrong in terms of managerial measures imposed in HE. She further accepted that she had relatively limited options, so she decided to find a solution of how to deal with the pattern of her academic practices:

What I have decided to do is to find a solution between satisfaction and the things I am obliged to do, to get some more time to the things I would like to do. (Assistant professor - R13-U3D1-2)
By saying this, she admitted that her academic life is a constant struggle for resources that required her attention to what should be produced, but mostly where to publish her research:

*It is important for us to publish in ‘good’ journals, [...]*, by good journals I mean – a journal that someone has decided to count as a good journal. [...] We are members of a factory. I want to resist as much as I can because I am part of the institution, as much as I can to that way of working. It is difficult. But I know many people who think in that way. (Assistant professor- R13-U3D1-2)

She described her motives and signs of resistance when elaborating on her experiences. However, she maintained an appropriate balance when developing the projects she found fulfilling. Similar negative thoughts were expressed by the associate professor (R14-U3D1-1). He explained that such practices led academics to produce a number of shallow papers of a questionable value:

*Writing papers in particular journals with specific impact factors [is] necessary [...] [for] improving your career and getting to higher ranks. So, the need to publish gives a field for the corresponding companies to expand their work and create more and more journals, more and more conferences, so this is what I call ‘publication industry’, and this is what forces academics, in several cases, to publish garbage, to be honest. (Associate professor - R14-U3D1-1)*

Likewise, an additional degree of caution was placed by academics on the role of the evaluation committees in supporting academic career progression and its success. For example, the lecturer explained the following:

*If someone wants to be successful in academia, I would say, they have to please the evaluation committees and [...] they have to be refocusing mostly on research, perhaps at the expense of other pillars of being an academic. (Lecturer - R12-U2D3-1)*

Later, he expressed his disagreement regarding any standardisation of a certain number of publications by metaphorically explaining the whole irrationality of this tradition:

*I disagree with having any kind of quota in how many papers you need to publish, publishing just because you have to publish. It is like having a policeman saying ‘I have to give 10 tickets today, 10 speeding tickets today,
because it is my quota’, but this does not make sense. A policeman is there to protect people, and the researcher or academic is to do research. (Lecturer - R12-U2D3-1)

Responses such as these indicated the existing gap between academic freedom and the necessity to be framed by the system in terms of producing ‘hot’ topics during a specific period of time, at the expense of fundamental ground-breaking findings. He also expressed his negative attitude to the mechanism of peer-review system due to its inconsistency and unfair approach of judging:

Regarding peer evaluation: [...] you think about the problem, you are putting your time, you are putting your effort, excitement to propose a solution to a problem and you try to publish that. And you spend 6 months writing that article up and then some other persons spend 2 hours reading your article and decide whether it worth it or not. So, there is something wrong with this picture. (Lecturer - R12-U2D3-1)

Academics (in this study) expressed disappointment with the necessity of achieving preset outcomes that caused unreasonable competition:

I think this works negatively in the academia: creates people who are very stressed and creates people who become [...] – they want ‘to eat’ each other. They are very competitive, they get their posts. I think we are not moving healthily in the academia, the way we do. [...] I think I get my freedom, although the system does not allow you to do so. The system wants you to participate in European projects, so if you do this, you kind of put restrictions to yourself. (Lecturer - R17-U2D1-2)

She acknowledged a continuous load of publications as an unacceptable practice just because academics are pushed to produce. In the following extract she described her negative experience:

I have colleagues who write 20 articles per year. You know what they write? Most of them are the same things with different words. [...] It is against the quality. When you work under pressure in order to produce because you have to produce – this is against quality. But always it depends on the person. There are people in the academia, if you leave them they might produce an article every 10
years, and this is the exceptional article and I accept that. But I think that all this fuss about getting funded, getting published – what creates is competition and that is not healthy in the academia [...] (Lecturer - R17-U2D1-2)

Thus, in respect to a constant inevitable process of being measured, compared and ranked (Davies and Thomas 2002), the lecturer (R17-U2D1-2) expressed her severe concerns about such policies. She did not believe that these are the realistic standards to inspire academics:

*I have submitted an article to a top journal and for six months I did not get any response from them, and I had to call them three times and write them five emails and after six months to get an email saying: ‘I am sorry it is not accepted’, without [...] [sending] the negative responses of the reviewers on the basis of which I could improve my work. That is not professional.* (Lecturer - R17-U2D1-2)

She continued on sharing her experiences and expressed her doubts regarding the principles of work which demotivated certain academics to perform their work obligations:

*I think that the system is not healthy as it stands at the moment both for academics and for the society. You produce knowledge because you have to produce. Sometimes we do not look at the impact of the knowledge, of what we create in the society. We do this just because we have to do it: complete papers, to put them down in the CV.* (Lecturer - R17-U2D1-2)

With this in mind, academics were asked to give their opinion regarding the concept of tenure as well as their career priorities. There were diverse types of opinion on this matter. For example, the lecturer (R17-U2D1-2) brought to the fore her thoughts about the performance of her colleagues. From her words, the system of evaluation of academics who achieved tenure-track positions should be reconsidered, due to inconsistencies between the reality of their performance and expectations from the society:

*I have colleagues: they try not to teach, because the University [...] puts them to do more valuable things. But teaching your students is valuable also. They do not evaluate teaching and they do not evaluate pastoral care and a contribution*
to the society, because, unfortunately, being in the academia, some, they think that it is only research and writing, so they do not like teaching because it is time-consuming, and does not give them credit. This is what I think. The system wants you to be like that. Unfortunately. (Lecturer - R17-U2D1-2)

Such experiences showed that academic priorities were turned towards activities that could facilitate visible outcomes in terms of career credits (Harley and Lee 1997). This made academics keep themselves continuously on their toes:

Nowadays in academia teaching is not evaluated as much […]. It is more important to publish something in a high-impact journal that changes every year, than to have, for example, 100 students knowing how to do a multiple regression. […] I do not appreciate that teaching is underestimated more and more. (Lecturer - R8-U3D1-2)

Another lecturer made it clear that teaching and research should be considered equally due to numerous benefits obtained when one fits another (Smith and Rust 2011). This was also evidenced by the following commentary:

It is difficult to switch back and forth from a teacher to a researcher. We are working on ideas, and ideas progress in a dialogue; and teaching is essentially a dialogue, and when you teach, especially naïve questions help you see things differently, […] it makes you be a better researcher. (Lecturer - R18-U1D3-1)

The associate professor also strongly supported that research and teaching cannot be considered apart:

The research should fit teaching and sometimes teaching fits research, because people ask the right questions and then you go back and say ‘hang on, this is a real issue!’ (Associate professor - R3-U1D2-1)

In the discussion about career upgrades, another associate professor expressed his criticism regarding those who stagnate once they have achieved their permanent positions:

Some experienced academics in a formal career path, they have to produce constantly (not all of them, I guess), and they forget teaching, or they did teaching 5 years ago and they use the same notes again and again. This saves
time, of course, but not all groups of students are the same. You have to adapt, and essentially you cannot ever stop rewriting the notes, because new research comes in. [...] For career development - it has to be research and that is why teaching stays behind, and sometimes students are not satisfied. (Associate professor - R14-U1D3-1)

However, there was a contradictory view. The lecturer (R10-U1D1-2) explained in detail her positive attitudes towards the importance of a tenure track since it could bring fulfillment but at the expense of a ruined work-life balance:

I do not think that getting to a non-tenure position is as fulfilling as getting to a tenure track. [...] what I cannot understand is that it takes much more time, and sometimes this is kind of tension between the expectations once you are in a tenure track. You are expected to do much more research, but at the same time, during the first few years you are given most responsibilities beyond research. [...] And you know that by the end of the third year you have an evaluation and you have to have research and publications, and then what you only do is just work, you forget about private life, your family life. (Lecturer - R10-U1D1-2)

This reflective account of the lecturer supported the arguments of Bansel (2011), who expressed his view on constant negotiation between academics’ aspirations and institutional goals.

However, there were alternative views on tenure. Some academics complied with the system and followed a prescribed number of tasks. In other words, they were passive actors in changing conditions. These findings supported the conclusions made by Teelken (2012) who asserted that there are cases when academics accept the influences of managerialism on their academic performance and try to tackle these challenges. The associate professor (R20-U1D2-1) explained that the nature of his work was naturally based on continuous measurements in order to meet the demands of a real practice. He stressed that these initiatives were inevitable:

[Academic work] has its own pressure: articles need to be printed, have to be reviewed, you get comments; you can be discouraged, because all the time you are being tested and tested. (Associate professor - R20-U1D2-1)
Similarly, one of the lecturers commented on the important role of strict rules that guided his performance and therefore, he had to comply with these requirements:

[...] for the University as an organisation we are just employees, so the relationship is sort of the kind of relationship you would expect between the employer and the employee, so we work for the University, we have to comply to the rules, we get paid, we have some benefits. (Lecturer - R4-U1D3-1)

Likewise, another associate professor commented that academics must consider seriously the system in which they work, and if there is something that does not satisfy their needs, this means their career choice simply should be reconsidered:

This is the system, if you do not like it, then maybe you do not want to be an academic, so whatever basically subscribes to the system, with all these disadvantages and weaknesses - and we know that there are disadvantages and weaknesses - this is how the system is, it is like any kind of job. If you want to move on, there are certain things you have to fulfill to move up the ladder. (Associate professor - R6-U2D1-1)

He reflected on his working obligations and explained how he protected his time by avoiding some unnecessary tasks:

I try to protect my time, but I cannot always refuse to be in committees, whenever I can refuse I do so, but I cannot always refuse because I am responsible - this is the part of my job description. (Associate professor - R6-U2D1-1)

Moreover, stories of academics revealed their acceptance of some implications of performance indicators. For example, the associate professor (R20-U1D2-1) justified his point of view regarding the positive features of standardised requirements in HE. He explained that these contributed to the establishment of a clear, unbiased basis for comparison with other academic institutions:

All this quantification is good (how many articles per year, the average number of articles per faculty member, number of articles per department) – yes, these are nice indicators; we cannot ignore them as academics. We need to compete fairly with other institutions outside the island, therefore we cannot just say: “we are doing well” – this is not enough. But also we have to look at the
particularity of the field and of the individual and his potential to move in academia. (Associate professor - R20-U1D2-1)

Another associate professor provided a slightly different perspective on this matter. Even though the associate professor (R16-U2D4-1) generally accepted the necessity of an enforced peer-review system, he suggested that the criteria of such a formal assessment should be revaluated:

*Peer-reviewing and getting the opinions of others in a formal or an informal manner is very very important to what we do as researchers. I think the mechanism should be replaced. I agree with peer-review system in journals, I agree with evaluation [...]. I think in a way, particularly for someone working in a public University (publicly funded), I think we have to be accountable of what we do and the quality of what we do, not just how much, but also how good or how bad we do. So in general, I am in favor of this system.* (Associate professor - R16-U2D4-1)

The words of the research assistant partially coincided with the previous remarks:

*It does affect the job and wastes some [...] potentials. [...], but [this] might be good especially for the people who need the guideline: one-two-three. Some people cannot think outside the box. [...] I hope that people will refine these procedures in order to be applied only to people who need it.* (Research assistant - R15-U2D3-1)

Thus, he confirmed both the importance of getting well with the system and the necessity to amend the assessment procedures for better results.

7.4. **Conclusion**

Academics addressed the existing inadequacies of departmental support towards their career development. They explained their worries regarding inconsistencies of funding sources, the undermined role of teaching and overlooked requirements to improve
teaching quality, the permission for a sabbatical leave and the logic of career progression at the beginning of a tenure track.

Academics were anxious about the requirements they had to follow at the expense of their academic autonomy. They emphasised the problematic nature of unequal treatment of their research outcomes by highlighting the existing contradictions in the way universities were operated, since it created uncertainties about their academic identity. They were worried about the exerted formalized power and control (Bryson et al. 2006) inside and outside universities they worked for, since these influences negatively affected their academic identity. However, there were cases when academics complied with managerial arrangements by taking them for granted.

Concluding, it can be argued that the wave of changes in Cypriot public universities has produced two groups of academics: those who accept partially or fully the requirements of the system and those who attempt to stay alert and find their own way to survive by compromising with the demands of the system. The process of seeking this balance requires from academics extra courage to move on to more secure positions. The next chapter will include the main implications of the findings arising from this study. It will also describe the potential areas for future research.
Chapter 8

Conclusion and Recommendations

8.1. Introduction

This chapter includes the research findings of this study, the main contributions to the existing literature and implications for practice. It also provides an overview of the potential directions for future research. The findings are presented in accordance with the research questions as well as in line with the conceptual framework of the study.

To understand how CoPs influence career development of academics in Cypriot public universities, this research was based on Lave and Wenger’s (1991) and Wenger’s (1998) theorisation of situated learning as part of the conceptual framework. In adopting a narrative inquiry in the current study, the main emphasis was on exploring the stories academics generated about their learning practices and the importance of the context in which they made sense of their development.

8.2. Key empirical findings

In examining workplace learning barriers and their impact on the forms of participation of academics within and beyond CoPs, a number of insights were exposed. Academics encountered different working contexts and participated in overlapping CoPs across departmental boundaries. Based on this observation, a concern was on the existing influences of belonging to multiple communities on academics’ development.

The research suggested that academics (once they were asked about the way they learnt their current job) were less aware about learning as a social practice than formal
training. This is because their informal learning was not always supported with the right conditions and thus did not always contribute to their learning outcomes. A continuing theme was the deficiency of explicit information regarding the required practices that caused uncertainty among newcomers. In particular, limited involvement in shared practices of their departmental communities restricted their access to clearly articulated feedback on their progress. Lack of reified artefacts (e.g. manuals regarding the processes and procedures) shaped academics’ professional values. This indicates that reified forms could play an important role in coordinating the actions, shaping academics’ perceptions and identities (Wenger 1998).

It was highlighted that the trust of the officials of public HEIs regarding sporadic formal meetings with newcomers has actually treated the symptom of a more fundamental problem. Instead of formal arrangements which made academic work even more intensified, academics asked for more opportunities to be involved within the academic life of departmental communities in order to support the origins of disciplinary communities and their development (Fuller and Unwin 2004; 2003). Consequently, even though the study challenged Lave and Wenger’s (1991) and Wenger’s (1998) theorisation, I am in agreement with the significance they placed on gradual participation in mutual practices as a source of learning and development.

Even though there were a few cases of academics’ mutual engagement in practices of departmental communities, the rationale had little to do with mutual negotiation of meanings, but rather looking for an opportunity to reduce their individual work burden, that, in turn, could not facilitate the development of a shared sense of their community. It was also revealed that lack of status differences had a positive influence on nurtured collaborative relations between academics in departmental communities (this was the case of a new department with a small number of academics). However, the existing argument in favour of smaller communities for better engagement and facilitation of newcomers’ participation was challenged in my study (Curral et al. 2001). Instead, the size was not actually the main criterion of mutually developed community relations.

Another striking finding was about peripheral participation and its powerful role in communities (Wenger 1998). The findings revealed the existing conflicting barriers to newcomers’ development at the periphery that led them develop much stronger ties with
high-density communities of relevant academic practices (mostly research) outside their prevalent departments. This meant that their departments did not always contribute to their disciplinary identity development. Thus, their membership in disciplinary communities was dependent upon their participation in diverse activities across multiple academic communities. This finding sheds light on the blurred boundaries of departmental communities (James 2007) which were constantly renegotiated, that made academics reconcile their membership and status they hold.

Consequently, regardless of academics’ formal employment contracts, they were participating in multiple communities across their departments and institutions (Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2003). However, the findings contradicted the view of Fuller and Unwin (2004; 2003) regarding the main reasons for multiple membership. In my study, academics were interested in participating in multiple communities due to relatively weak and short-lived dialogues between newcomers and ‘old-timers’ of their current departments. Even though academics did not comment on competitive pressure, they admitted the existing challenges which were related to reconciliation of their status due to their multiple membership. One of the most serious consequences of these constraints is the intensification of their workload.

**Power inequalities and access to resources were central to the discussion about academics’ career development and their identity formation.** There were cases when ‘old-timers’ intentionally restricted newcomers’ access to the repertoire of practices by manipulating, discriminating and exerting control over newcomers that directly restricted their academic autonomy. Even though newcomers were treated as potential members of the community (legitimised members), they experienced power imbalances. Indeed, there were instances when ‘old-timers’ disabled the peripheral participation of newcomers and their further development into full practitioners (Bush er et al. 2007; Hughes et al. 2007).

Newcomers who ended up alone at the edges of departmental communities remained marginal (Wenger 1998), felt disconnected with the faculty life, and experienced greater reliance on their previously learnt practices in attempts to adjust to new duties and responsibilities. Instead of diverse learning opportunities they were hindered and even
restricted from their full participation that resulted in loss of their status benefits, and thus negatively affected their identity construction.

Academics commented upon the influences of the wider socio-economic context of HE on their community relations and their academic identities. Academics explained their worries regarding inconsistencies of funding sources, the undermined role of teaching and restrictions regarding a sabbatical leave at the beginning of a tenure track.

The following findings will explain the challenges of new members in the process of their legitimate peripheral participation. Along with the intensification of academic workload (widely addressed in my study) and simultaneous participation in multiple CoPs, the necessity of exploring the LPP of academics became critical to explaining their workplace learning and development (Fuller et. al. 2005). Newcomers (novices and experienced academics) revealed similarities in terms of difficulties they faced at the edges of academic communities. This finding was based on evidence about perceived isolation and limited collaborative experiences between newcomers and ‘old-timers’.

In making steps forward to the central practices of their communities, academics faced a number of challenges in getting access to necessary resources required for their development. They described their legitimate participation as a challenging practice (Jawitz 2007) which could not be associated with an ‘exposure time’ to learning the central practices of CoPs (Lave and Wenger 1991). Instead of gradual mastering of more central practices, they experienced difficulties in becoming insiders of academic communities.

The findings revealed more contradictions to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) explanation of LPP. As such, instances when established academics learnt from younger academics by reflecting on their practices, demonstrated that their learning was beyond their LPP (Fuller et. al. 2005). There were cases of fast transitions of newcomers (novices and experienced academics) to the central practices of departmental communities. However, these academics experienced uncertainty similar to those academics who were restricted from enabled peripherality. It was evident that ‘quick starters’ (regardless of their
experience) required regular ongoing support from ‘old-timers’ in order to gradually enhance their competence and enrich their involvement within CoPs (Eraut 2004).

An important insight of this research was that task mastery on its own could not be perceived as a prerequisite for academics’ full membership in academic CoPs. Even though newcomers did well in learning multiple roles and new responsibilities, they so did with certain constraints since intuition rather than open communication with ‘old-timers’ (when dealing with unknown practices) prevailed. As a result, academics described the perceived weaknesses of the working environment and expressed their interest in having more frequent interaction with their colleagues. These academics commented upon the role of socialisation tactics as necessary for their adaptation to workplaces. This contradicts the strictly participative metaphor of learning (Wenger 1998; Lave and Wenger 1991). However, the consequences of such restrictions should not be undervalued due to the following negative outcomes:

- Newcomers experienced lack of confidence in performing tasks that in turn restricted their intense involvement within the academic life of departmental communities. They experienced uncertainty about the repertoire of the community and lack of reassurance towards their development.
- The continuity of departmental communities was questioned (Lave and Wenger 1991) since ‘old-timers’ did not negotiate the way in which community practices should be performed and sustained over time.

Regarding the impacts of new managerialism in Cypriot public HE on academics’ career development, a few interesting points were revealed. Academics expressed their doubts regarding the way universities operated that made them (especially novices) experience difficulties in joining public HE with the vision to be developed into tenured members. They questioned the efficiency of the QA and performance evaluation system applied in Cypriot public HEIs and showed their willingness to accept a more transparent and less bureaucratic performance appraisal system.

The research findings showed contradictory ways in which academics described their roles in HE. As such, they highlighted how their identity construction was shifting because of the complex set of practices they were involved in. Academics commented upon limited academic autonomy mostly when researching and viewed their academic
career paths as uncertain. However, there were academics who tried to reach a compromise by keeping a balance between required and desirable performance outputs in terms of research and publications. Thus, I argue that the changes in Cypriot public HE produced two groups of academics: those who accepted partially or fully the requirements of the system and those who attempted to stay alert and find their own ways to survive, by compromising with the demands of the system. The process of seeking this balance required extra courage from academics to comply with obligations and move on to more secure positions within HE.

8.3. **Recommendations of the research**

8.3.1. **Theoretical implications**

Based on the main findings of the research, theoretical implications and a number of practice-based recommendations have been developed. This study contributed to a more coherent understanding of the powerful role of peripheral participation when academics belong to multiple CoPs (Wenger 1998). The findings advanced existing knowledge on the barriers to academics’ participation and brought new insights into ‘the expansive-restrictive continuum’ of learning environments of academic CoPs (Fuller and Unwin 2004; 2003). What was surprising was that academics widened their participation outside their departmental communities due to restrictions they faced in getting the required support for their development. Thus, this study empirically indicated that the main motives for participation in multiple academic CoPs were associated with the embedded restrictive learning environment of their departments rather than the expansive one (Fuller and Unwin 2004; 2003).

The findings added new insights into Wenger’s (1998) considerations of power by paying a more focused attention to the existing micro-politics in departmental CoPs and the role of core members. This research revealed that academic development in CoPs is to be better understood by questioning the influential role of the wider dynamic context of HE that has become significant in shaping academics’ forms of participation and their identities.
Given the need to explore the pathways to improve interaction between academics in their disciplinary communities, the research findings explained LPP as a dynamic practice that academics experienced at different stages of their careers, which often restricted their development and identity formation. The notion of LPP was considered in light of the existing transformations in HE, including ongoing changes in employment relations and subsequent academics’ ‘lateral’ moves between communities.

What is interesting is that the process of LPP is much less conventional than that explained by Lave and Wenger (1991) due to the existing restrictions to the central practices of academic communities. This explained the challenges academics faced across boundaries of academic communities that increased their chances to retaining their marginal identity. Thus, this study challenged the natural development of academics from peripheral towards full members. Having experienced such constraints, they took initiatives in performing new tasks and kept their minds open to new opportunities and collaborations across departmental and disciplinary boundaries that enhanced their capability to develop their careers.

This research proposed a new direction in the practice of academic career research with the emphasis on academic workplaces as learning sites that have significant impacts on shifting academics’ identities and their professional values. The intermediate findings of this research were presented at the Festival of Postgraduate Research 2014 (University of Leicester), in the format of a poster with the title ‘Academic Workplaces: How to Advance a Professional Career when Losing a Shared Vision for Involvement and Support’.

8.3.2. Implications for practice

Based on evidence of the isolated practices experienced by academics within disciplinary communities, the importance of mentorship should be considered as a mutually-reinforcing activity for adjustment to a new community through the negotiation of meaning on shared practices. In so doing, the development of mutual trust may adequately minimise power imbalances between novices and ‘old-timers’, which has a fundamental role to play in gaining access to the central practices of a CoP.
and participating more directly in its cultural life. Thus, a more intense involvement of newcomers within the academic life of departmental communities is required in order to make newcomers be accepted more quickly by developing their confidence. This should include the provision of more coherent and consistent guidance about faculty/departmental responsibilities, goals and tasks.

This research provided academics with an opportunity to reflect on their roles and identities. That is why it is further suggested that ongoing open discussions about the community itself and accurate feedback about work and career progress are likely to facilitate a shared understanding of the domain of community knowledge. In this way, newcomers (novice and experienced academics) will be better prepared to face challenges imposed by new-managerialist ideology embedded in HEIs. Taking into consideration the intensification of academic work, the development of reified forms (captured in written or electronic manuals and handbooks regarding regulations and academics’ responsibilities) should be provided. This will be much more helpful compared to occasional formal events which intensify academic workload.

Special attention should be paid to differences in perception between newcomers (novice and experienced academics) and ‘old-timers’ on the provision of guidance. ‘Old-timers’ should introduce and facilitate a regular reflective guidance for supporting newcomers’ participation based on their experiences and theoretical knowledge (Leijen et al. 2014). In so doing, more frequent discussions should be incorporated into the collaborative learning of community members which will subsequently support their development and recognition. Since informal learning was perceived to be the most common form of learning for departmental communities, more attention should be paid to informal events in order to respond to the needs of academics in networking.

Since academics from other countries (mostly Greece) and Cypriots who studied and worked abroad (UK, USA, Germany, and Greece) faced additional challenges to their participatory practices in academic communities, the promotion of interactive workshops could lead to a better understanding of cultural differences in order to get better acquainted with their colleagues. This would enhance commitment among academics to the domain of their departmental communities since they would have a shared view. Another way to improve group cohesion is through team-building
activities as a means of enriching understanding of the importance of shared practices for individual progression and the continuity of CoPs.

Academics described the necessity of a more impartial system of performance assessment as an essential step in common efforts to modernise Cypriot HE. Thus, it is timely to regenerate Cypriot HE in nurturing diversity in public HEIs through cultivating an institutional climate of enhanced citizenship and cooperation in response to the requirements of the Bologna process. In so doing, the dialogue between academics and politicians (in particular, the MOEC) should remain the highest priority. This will help to achieve beneficial outcomes from a combination of efforts to establish necessary support for academics’ development that suits the goals of Cypriot HE. This recommendation will support the existing gap in Cypriot public HEIs concerning the difficulties newcomers face when adapting to new academic workplaces and developing their careers.

Researchers need seriously to consider the nurturing of academic CoPs, since HE involves knowledge development, which is likely to be achieved through the participation and negotiation of old principles of disciplinary communities through new perceptions and practices. The current study has provided a framework in which policymakers and academics can explore the restrictions and challenges experienced in public universities. As a result, if the governing bodies of public universities view Cypriot public HE as a highly competitive labour market with demanding selection requirements, they should consider the proposed recommendations in order to develop further a positive image of public universities as workplaces and to allow them to become even more attractive for young talented academics from all over the world.

8.4. Future research

Having completed this study, I reflected on potential directions for future research which are linked with the existing limitations of this study. This research could have included exploration of academics’ experiences within Cypriot public HE by applying a longitudinal approach. In other words, the same sample group could have been targeted
during one academic year or more, in order to gain even deeper inquiry into academics’ career development.

Additionally, the research data could have been generated by analysing a wider range of documentation on academic practices in departmental communities, including the minutes of regular staff meetings, training and assessment logs, appraisal forms and universities’ strategy maps. This could have supported or challenged the findings about the complexity of academic practices in different contexts and situations. To broaden our knowledge on academics’ participatory practices in public HEIs, gender differences should be further explored since there were indications of discriminatory behaviour which was significant to the development of academics. This could be achieved by applying a feminist approach in exploring the development of female academic careers in light of new-managerialist practices.

Moreover, more studies should be conducted at the local level in order to better understand academics’ participatory practices and their identities, especially with the establishment of the unified CYAQAAE for all HEIs (public and private). Also, it is suggested that more research is needed in examining how old-timers’ identities are mediated by multiple contexts, including the influences of power-constrained relations. Additional attention could have been on part-time faculty staff (non-permanent staff) and their LPP which may differ from the experiences of those academics who participated in this study. Consequently, another topic for future research activities is related to the experiences of adjunct academics and their adjustment to academic workplaces (Coaldrake and Stedman 1999).

Having considered the current economic conditions, similar research should be conducted in Cypriot public universities under more favourable economic conditions in order to reveal whether there are any differences in the way how academics reflect on their professional practice. Additionally, the research could have included the comparative analysis of academics’ lives in Cypriot private and public HEIs in terms of their career development.

Another area of concern comes from the necessity of looking into individual characteristics of academics that may influence their acceptance in workplaces as well
as their willingness to participate in shared practices. The suggested tool for the analysis is the 16PF questionnaire (Raymond Cattell) that explains the sixteen personality characteristics structured around the ‘Big Five’ factors of personality. This choice is led by my previous experience in successfully applying this tool. Without looking into the personal characteristics of academics and understanding their motives to join HEIs, the insights into workplace learning are still deficient up to a certain extent.

**Self-reflection: the impact of this research on my academic identity**

Both my education and employment, as discussed in the methodology chapter, have been a connected string of experiences that influenced the way in which this study was conducted. In this section I will further reflect on how my experience as an academic led me to undertake this study, the impact of the research on my academic identity and my current thinking about the chosen topic.

Having worked in HE for a number of years, I felt the need to further develop myself as an academic. That is why, the research I chose to pursue was greatly influenced by my desire to learn more about myself and the academic world. In conducting this study, my reflections have brought to the fore my conflicting feelings regarding my academic career due to the existing demands of global mobility. That is why, the significance of this study for me is in its reflective nature which allowed me to construct a more critical and realistic understanding of the existing opportunities and constraints in relation to my career path. I achieved this by engaging with the academic and policy literature on academic communities and reflecting on the participants’ experiences that both contributed to my own learning.

Prior to this research study, I was only partially aware of the Cypriot public HE context, because I only had experience of working in the private HE sector. As a consequence of this study I learnt more about certain artefacts related to academic work in the public HE context, and how they compared to my academic experience in the private HE context. This, in turn, led me to reflect on my own academic identity. Further, as I became deeply engaged with the literature on academic CoPs and started to conduct the fieldwork, I realised that it was impossible to complete this study without my academic identity shifting. As such, I increased self-awareness about how to respond to
challenging situations in relation to my academic career by questioning my previously held beliefs about my professional status. I realised that I had to take a more active role in planning my professional future. As a consequence of this, I consider my research study as a life changing experience.

At the time of writing this section, I acknowledged that the stories that each academic told me were not just passing stories, but they helped me to reflect on my conflicting feelings of pursuing academic career and my role in Cypriot HE. Listening to academics’ stories my unanswered questions about my academic life in Cypriot HE were answered by the academics participating in my research. It was inspiring to expose myself to the world of HE and reflect on so many similarities with my participants in terms of our working experiences. The research drove me to continue working in the chosen academic field because of the need to keep developing a deeper understanding of ‘what I can do’ based on what I learnt from my research. More specifically, I learnt a great deal about the meaning of the research as a demanding process and its impact on the researcher. This understanding came through my continuous reflection on my priorities regarding my family and career and how my concurrent life experiences could tie together. Having completed my research study I became more focused on my academic practices that needed more attention in terms of improvement.

I can confidently say that my research study was a rewarding experience that enabled my career progression in terms of getting a new academic position at a private University. When talking about my research with my colleagues, I become extremely passionate when we are engaged in discussions concerning my findings. I sense their willingness to share thoughts and feelings regarding their participatory practices in multiple CoPs. I strongly believe that such reflective activities pertaining to the current situation in HE, can encourage academics to become mutually engaged and keep pace with each other in communities of disciplinary practices.
8.5. Conclusion

This chapter included the main findings of the study, recommendations, the potential directions for future research, and the impact of this research on my academic identity. Cypriot public HE is a relatively young academic environment. However, there are sound achievements in the Cypriot academic society due to hard work of talented academics who were resilient to diversity and dedicated to their disciplines and who initially began their work and found grounds for building the history of Cypriot HE.

The findings of my study have added new insights into the literature on academic CoPs, by challenging the existing theorisation of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998), and the research studies on HE. Moreover, my research responded to the existing research gap on academic CoPs in light of the current reforms in Cypriot HE regarding the assessment framework at a national level. My findings are particularly timely, given the concurrent financial instability in the country as well as the ongoing interest of the government towards university education at the public level with the aim to promote and modernise Cypriot HE. Consequently, my research has contributed to a better understanding of how academics develop their careers in order for policymakers, researchers and institutional leaders to take required measures at the given time.
Appendices

Appendix 1. Characteristics of the participants

Table 1. Characteristics of the participants (pilot work)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Working experience in HE</th>
<th>Working experience in the department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R1-U1D1-2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Special scientist</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2-U1D2-2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>4,5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R3-U1D2-1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Associate professor</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>7 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Characteristics of the interviewees of the main fieldwork

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Universities</th>
<th>Departments</th>
<th>Participants/gender</th>
<th>Working experience in the department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University_1</td>
<td>Department_1</td>
<td>2-female</td>
<td>1 year; 2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department_2</td>
<td>1-female 2-male</td>
<td>4,5 years 7 years; 23 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department_3</td>
<td>3-male 1-female</td>
<td>2 years; 1,5 years; 9 years 17 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University_2</td>
<td>Department_1</td>
<td>2-male 1-female</td>
<td>11 years; 7 years 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department_2</td>
<td>1-female</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department_3</td>
<td>2-male</td>
<td>4 years; 3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department_4</td>
<td>1-male</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University_3</td>
<td>Department_1</td>
<td>2-male 2-female</td>
<td>5 years; 3 years 3 years; 2 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. Full profile of the interviewees of the main fieldwork

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Working experience in higher education</th>
<th>Working experience in the department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R4-U1D3-1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R5-U2D1-1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>21 years</td>
<td>11 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R6-U2D1-1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Associate professor</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R7-U1D3-1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Associate professor</td>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R8-U3D1-2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R9-U3D1-1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Special scientist</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R10-U1D1-2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R11-U2D2-2</td>
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<td>Associate professor</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R12-U2D3-1</td>
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<td>Lecturer</td>
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<td>4 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>R13-U3D1-2</td>
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<td>Assistant professor</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R14-U3D1-1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Associate professor</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R15-U2D3-1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Research assistant</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R16-U2D4-1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Associate professor</td>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R17-U2D1-2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R18-U1D3-1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R19-U1D3-2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>30 years</td>
<td>17 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R20-U1D2-1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>35 years</td>
<td>23 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Academic positions of the participants (the whole sample group)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>№ of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Assistant</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special scientist</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2. Access letter

ACCESS LETTER

Dear ________,

I am a Doctorate student at the University of Leicester, and I am conducting the research aimed at studying the impact of workplace learning on academic career development. I feel that your participation will give an extremely important contribution to my research, and with your permission I would like to set a short meeting at your premises in order to conduct an interview session.

During the interview session you will be asked questions regarding your professional background within academia. The interview will be tape-recorded in order to ensure that all the proceedings are carefully incorporated at the stage of data analysis as well as professionally transcribed.

All information will be kept confidential and will be used only for the purposes of the current research, ensuring anonymity of the process to the extent that your identification will not appear in the thesis and in any other related academic publications. The individual transcript of the interviews will be available upon request to the participant for confirmation before data analysis.

At the end of the research all the participants may benefit by becoming more informed about how to maximise the suitability of workplace learning for their further professional and personal development.

I sincerely hope that you find the purpose of this research sufficiently interesting and rewarding for you.
Please do not hesitate to contact me for any queries or concerns you may have.

Yours sincerely,

Irina Lokhtina
II38@leicester.ac.uk
Appendix 3. The informed consent form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

As part of my Doctorate studies at the University of Leicester, I, the undersigned, Irina Lokhtina, will be conducting the research aimed at studying the impact of workplace learning on academic career development.

I feel that your participation will give an extremely important contribution to my research. However, your participation is an entirely voluntary process and therefore, you can show your willingness to drop out of the process at any time you wish. This study will be broken into two interview sessions (if required) and will take about 90 minutes each to be completed at the premises of your institution. During the sessions you will be asked questions regarding your professional background within academia. You will be engaged in the discussion about your academic experience. The interview will be tape-recorded in order to ensure that all the proceedings are carefully incorporated at the stage of data analysis as well as professionally transcribed.

All the collected data will be stored and accessed only by the researcher. All the information will be kept confidential and will be used only for the purposes of the current research, ensuring anonymity of the process to the extent that your identification will not appear in the thesis and in any other related academic publications. The individual transcript of the interview will be available upon request to the participant for confirmation before data analysis. At the end of the research all the participants may benefit by becoming more informed about how to maximise the suitability of workplace learning for their further professional and personal development.

I sincerely hope that you find the purpose of this research and the assurances I have provided, sufficiently interesting, rewarding and assuring in order to take part in the study. I would like to kindly ask you to confirm your acceptance to participate in the research.

I, the undersigned, have read and understood this consent form, and I agree to participate in this research with the title: The impact of workplace learning on academic career path development in tertiary education which is going to be carried out by the researcher Irina Lokhtina.

I understand the purpose of the research being undertaken and I allow the researcher, Irina Lokhtina, to use the information I provide for the purpose of her study and its output. I am aware that I can drop out of the research at any time I wish. I understand that anonymity and confidentiality of the results will be guaranteed.

Name: ______________
Signature: ___________                         Researcher: __________________

Date: _______________                         Signature: __________________
## Appendix 4. Tentative list of interview questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Research theme</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Personal information</td>
<td>Gender / Status / Place of birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Career choice</td>
<td>What attracted you to a career in HE?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Please describe the key turning points of your academic career to date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Learning on-the-job</td>
<td>How did you manage to learn your current job tasks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What role did your formal qualifications and previous working experience (if any) play in your adaptation to your working tasks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What challenges did you face when you joined the department? / How did you manage to tackle them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What departmental support did you receive in order to adjust to your work? / Formal training courses? / Induction courses?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Social interaction / participatory practices</td>
<td>What is the most common way of communication used in the department?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How often do you meet with your colleagues to discuss common areas of concern? How does this happen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>If you would like to initiate collaboration with your colleagues - how do you start?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How often are you involved in common projects with your colleagues from the same department? / other departments?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Working tasks</td>
<td>What are the most enjoyable aspects of your work in the department?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What tasks can be described as the most time-consuming and the least time-consuming? / Any influences on career development?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What working tasks should academics pay more attention to, in getting going?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>To what extent are you involved in decisions on your workload? / How does this influence your career development?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>When did you manage to feel yourself being part of the department?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The role of an academic</td>
<td>Who can be considered to be an academic nowadays?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What is the role of an academic in the society?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 7 | Career ambitions | What are you working on at the moment?  
To what extent do you believe you are free to devote your time to your professional interests?  
What is your next step in your career ladder?  
What are the main drivers to achieve this?  
What kind of departmental support do you require to achieve your career goal?  
What is your opinion about an academic tenure track?  
What are the main criteria of a successful academic career?  
What might restrict the career progression of an academic nowadays?  
What keeps you going and working in HE?  
What can you suggest to an individual who considers to start his/her career in HE? |
Appendix 5. Ethical approval

University of Leicester Ethics Review Sign Off Document

To: IRINA LOKHTINA
Subject: Ethical Application Ref: il38-d690
(Please quote this ref on all correspondence)

14/11/2012 15:34:22

Labour Market Studies

Project Title: The impact of workplace learning on academic career path development in tertiary education.

Thank you for submitting your application which has been considered.

This study has been given ethical approval, subject to any conditions quoted in the attached notes.

Any significant departure from the programme of research as outlined in the application for research ethics approval (such as changes in methodological approach, large delays in commencement of research, additional forms of data collection or major expansions in sample size) must be reported to your Departmental Research Ethics Officer.

Approval is given on the understanding that the University Research Ethics Code of Practice and other research ethics guidelines and protocols will be compiled with

- http://www2.le.ac.uk/institution/committees/research-ethics/code-of-practice
- http://www.le.ac.uk/safety/
Appendix 6. Extract from an interview

Extract from Interview Transcript - R3-U1D2-1

Interviewer: I would like to begin by asking you a few questions about your main motives, your main reasons to start your career in HE.

Interviewee: I liked it. I did not want to do anything else except research and teaching. That is one thing. The second thing is when you do <named> there are not many other outlets. So in a sense if you want to continue doing research, you have to do some kind of affiliation. Affiliation means teaching and, of course, if you want to continue doing something later <named> you also need to do research, so this goes together with teaching. Of course everything else: you need to have access to the library, all those things. So more or less if you are serious about what you do – this is the only thing you can do - to go to some kind of academic outlets.

Interviewer: How did you manage to learn your current job tasks?

Interviewee: Well, I had five years of experience before that as an assistant professor at <named>. And the way you do things is by trial and error. Now, when I was in <named>, there was a kind of training seminar about academic teaching, higher education teaching, which I attended but it was not particularly useful. So, you mainly learn through trial and error, through doing things.

Interviewer: You said that formal training was not particularly useful. Can you please explain the reasons?

Interviewee: Oh, it was a usual manager-inspired kind of things. So it began with ice breakers, then it continued with ‘let’s teach someone a skill’: we had to teach the instructor how to ride a ‘three-wheel bicycle’. There were also group bonding exercises - all these things. The problem is that these are fine if you want to get trainers into the training route, but academic teaching is about empowering students, getting students to start thinking for themselves, and also transfer of knowledge. There is a considerable part of transfer of knowledge, perhaps not as much as people used to think. So, you
know, getting people to learn how they can teach skills is not always useful, it is only partially useful. And I think I did not finish that seminar. I did not see the point of finishing it. But yeah, teaching, you do through trial and error.

**Interviewer:** What kind of support did you receive when you started working at the University?

**Interviewee:** Hmm, I guess the support was at the informal personal level. You know, people actually were coming over and were saying: ‘Look, this is how things work. If you want to do this, then you have to do that first’ or ‘it is a good idea’ [...]. So, personal informal way.

**Interviewer:** What are the criteria of a successful academic career?

**Interviewee:** Well, the criteria [...] it could be research, I suppose [...] teaching is very hard to quantify, I mean I know that teaching matters, but teaching is very difficult. I will tell you a story: when I was 21, I listened to a lecturer, I did not understand a thing, but years later this particular lecture helped me understand things and actually made choices about my life. I did not understand a thing at that time; if I just assessed the lecturer three hours after the lecture I would say ‘he was horrible’. I mean he came in, he talked about the topic that I did not understand; it was awful. He was referring to things I could not understand. 20 years later I am saying that it was a momentous lecture because it helped me understand things and also helped me choose a career. So how can you assess teaching? So yeah, I believe that people should not be assessed on teaching, on pedagogy, on their relationships with students. Sometimes you have students who do not like your courses, they do not understand what you are talking about <....>.
Appendix 7. Extract from an interview (a sample of coding)

<....>

**Interviewer:** How did you manage to learn your current job tasks?

**Interviewee:** Let me first begin with the institution where I work. There is a perception that academics need to produce as much as possible in terms of research, in terms of publications, in terms of teaching. The University actually, generally speaking, and the department expect from all of us that we [pause] build career locally and internationally as well, which means that we have to have contacts with people locally (in my case I need to get to know people in <named>, because through them I can go into <named>). At the same time I need to be in touch with colleagues from other universities locally, so we can set up joined projects and work collaboratively. This is one part, this is the local aspect, but at the same time the university in a way expects from us to have international collaborations, to present at international conferences, also to produce peer-reviewed international journal publications, manuscripts that are published by international publishers. These are the expectations from the university and the department. So more recognised internationally you are, better things will be for you, job wise.

To be honest, I am more on the international level. My collaboration at the moment with the people that I know from other Universities mainly and the majority of work that I have done. And it is only last year when I started taking initiatives to contact people around me, people from the department, people from the department of <named>, department of <named>. I contacted people on my own initiative; people did not come to me except from one case [pause], asking me to collaborate with them. I went out asking whether they would like to collaborate with me, because I have realised that my colleagues also work in isolation, they wanted to collaborate with people from within the university. I thought, you know [pause], they would say, ‘ok maybe some other time’ or ‘we are too busy at the moment’, but they were really open and I realised that academics need to take this kind of initiative. Of course they need to be very careful whom to approach. First of all, because you can easily be rejected and this is not very good for you personally or for your academic profile, but it is a risk you need to take. Anyway it does not really matter if you ask people ‘would you like to collaborate with me?’, or ‘would you like to publish this with me?’- it does not do any harm at the end of the day, but only with people, you think are relevant to what you are doing. It is like breaking out of your own nice protected environment, exposing yourself somehow, and if people respond to that, what you get is a very nice collaboration either on the research paper or project or publication, and sometimes it is very nice when you take initiatives and it does produce something at the end. You feel nice because it is about yourself, and you tell yourself: ‘it was good that I finally took the initiative’.

When I came to Cyprus working as a <named>, before I was employed as a tenured member of staff at the department, I was offered the option to teach <named> and I found a lot of differences between my undergraduate students in <named> and undergraduate students here, because the culture is so different and because there is a long tradition of a lecture-type courses at the University. They expected me to lecture them, to stand there to simply lecture them, as they are [pause] attending perhaps another course, which was not the case for me, because I was dealing with a lot of teacher trainings. And as I said in my courses I would invite students in peers,
groups, joining projects, to send them out to do field work, so it was very different conditions than I used to work with. So when I came here I was a little bit disappointed in a way, because students had different expectations from me and I had different expectations from them given the nature of the courses that I was teaching. I remember it was that day when I was really very frustrated because I started teaching and asking students to respond to questions that I asked and I had them working in groups and I would get back a little response. I could feel that students did not like that. I was very disappointed because it has to be done the way I thought. It has to be done through a lot of interaction between myself and students. And for a period of time I was disappointed and every time I am going in for a month or so with new students attending my courses (as I said it takes me a month or even more sometimes to get them used to this type of teaching) and it is only during the last few weeks they realise the use, actually the usefulness of being exposed to this kind of teaching.

Interviewer: What kind of support did you receive when you started working at the University?

Interviewee: I have not got any support. Nothing, zero. It was just me and the courses I had to teach and I had to make most of the courses. No support at all, and this is not very <pause>, this was something that has been bothering me for quite some time when I came here, because when you come to a new institution you would expect somebody at least to take you around, to show you the premises or to tell you ‘this is the office when you need to go to do this, this is the library, this is this, this is that’. I did not get this at the beginning and, of course, I did not get information about other more important things rather than being shown around - like for instance [pause], we have, when you are employed by the <named> you need to do sort of paper work and of course you can imagine I did not know where to go because it was a completely new environment, very often I would make mistakes, the papers could come back and I would need to start from scratch. It was messy form the beginning, but this is one part, this is a bureaucratic part when you are employed by the <named>.
But after that I realised that we need a lot more support not just in the way we teach, or the content of the courses or how we get to choose courses or how the courses would relate to other people’s courses at the department, but also a lot of admin work that we also need to do. For instance I am <named>, I am a member of the <named> and it was by participating in various academic committees where I found out myself how the University works. And a few years ago it was this meeting we had at <named> where the rector of the University and […] other representatives of the university came along and […] the rector started asking questions like ‘Are you happy with the university, do you have any problems?’ Of course, I raised my hand and I said: ‘Look, I am fine, I do not have any problem at all, but I need more information about the University. You need to do something to induce smoothly all the newcomers. I do not know how strong I was, but a few months later what the University did - they uploaded the manual for people who come for the first time to University, giving information about all kinds of things, not just the bureaucratic or admin work, but also where to go, how to move from one place to another, how the University is structured, the various offices you need to go, how to survive as an academic in the University. So this is very helpful, especially for visitors, who are at the University for a short period of time, it is very very helpful.
But otherwise I did not receive any kind of support. I have to say this and I am very strong about it because very often and - I still do feel that - I work in isolation because my area of specialisation does not relate directly to what other people do in the department, only indirectly. And, of course, there are people in the department, whose work does not relate at all, this is completely outside my sphere, specialisation, so I did not receive guidance. I did not receive any support even though it was a one-off discussion like the department needs to set a mentoring scheme for new members of the department that could help them. But even the people who suggested that, are not very welcoming as persons so you do not feel comfortable to approach them and discuss your work and your area of research. So even though, orally it was an invitation for us, for new members of the department to approach the older members of the department - this was mentioned just once at the departmental meeting and that was it. We did not really receive any invitation. Maybe they expected us to go to them, but as persons they are not very welcoming.

Interviewer: From your own experience what kind of formal activities can be helpful for new members of your department?

Interviewee: First of all, I do not know whose job this could be, it could be an older member of the department or the secretary to spend few hours with you when you arrive, to tell you what to do in terms of your paper work and the forms you need to fill in and then to take you out, because it is very difficult to move from one campus to another campus. Then somebody needs to sit down with you and to discuss the requirements of the courses like how to set up the course, how many weeks the course lasts, how to break down your teaching over the amount of weeks, what you need to do, how to set up your mid-term exams, your final exams, the syllabus of the course, the mentality of the local students, the ways you need to approach them. This is the teaching part. Another part is to help you get a clear idea of what it means to do admin work for the department. I was told at the beginning, you need to do admin work, teaching work and research work. Teaching - I could understand, but admin, because I came from a different environment and administrative work was a bit different, I did not expect admin work to be so much. We need to do a lot of admin work [pause] which at the end of the day can exhaust us [...] this might be very time-consuming. Also, you need to support students in another way by writing them reference letters or [...] sending memos to members of staff to other departments. This is lot of work that takes time away from your work.

Of course, another part is the research part. For somebody who comes to Cyprus, they do not have the network that older members of the department have in order to set up the research projects. So this is very difficult to get to do. For me I knew that my target, research environment would be [...] in Cyprus, being [...] I knew where my areas were, because with this I had experience in Greece. But even to penetrate, to go in and have access to those who are the research target groups, let’s say, was very difficult. And I did not know the procedure and I think that I am not following the right way, because what I normally do is - I apply through [...] in Cyprus, then my application needs to be endorsed by [...] and then papers come back to me. So this is how I am given access to [...] but even after that I need to get in touch with [...], who also needs to give me access to [...] that I want to observe. So this was the procedure that I got to know during my second year of my tenure position [...] So it was very difficult for me to collect data for the first two years. I was trying to collect data, to set
up my own research work, but still within this new environment and not knowing people around it was difficult for me and I did not get a lot of help or even advice and, you know, just a tip to tell you: ‘Look, you know, this is the procedure, and this is how you need to go’. So, I found out how to survive in Cyprus as an academic just by trial and error and this is very time-consuming. Sometimes you get overwhelmed, disappointed and you feel like you want to stop but you cannot because of the pressure of the University and, of course, your own pressure: ‘like I need to do something, I need to carry out my research’. So even though you feel disappointed, the next day you wake up and say ‘ok, you have to start again because I cannot go back’. So, if the University could possibly allocate people who, I do not know, maybe perhaps from student officers or other people who can give some time and some basic information to new academics - that would be great. And also very often, I mean, I understand people are very busy especially within the department everybody has got their teaching work to do, their admin work, research work to do, but maybe perhaps a little more time with newcomers, new incoming members of staff. Perhaps, before the monthly departmental meetings or afterwards, because when somebody like myself came to the department I knew very little about the structure of the department, so I did not know where to go, whom to ask, who was responsible for x, y, z. So, most of the times I was going to the secretary and asking her about everything and anything and she would get, you know, sometimes impatient because I would bother her with almost everything. I did not know what to do and I was afraid of making mistakes, so for instance, to have somebody to confirm whether what I was about to do was the right thing to do.

I believe that all the departments need to support and help. Maybe this mentoring scheme would be good, maybe departments need to allocate older members of staff within the department to become mentors for new members, right? Of course this needs to be done you like and this needs to be arranged systematically, so for new members not to bother, and later on become nuisance for older ones, but at least for new members to know where to go, in case they need something. So this needs to be sorted out internally. Maybe University, as I told you before, has published this manual which is very good but, you know, members of staff they need internal support and they need time with somebody they feel comfortable with or relates to their area of specialisation somehow, or other criteria to be used for the selection of a mentor within the department. I think this would be very helpful.

But this has to be done very carefully because very often perceptions of individuals are sort of influencing. They have impacts on the newcomers, so those who are allocated as mentors, they need to stay as objective as possible and only limit themselves to information, rather than influence newcomers either academically or individually or at any other level: because the newcomers will develop and they will create a career of their own, so it has to be done in a very careful way because of the clashes. Very often within the department what we get is that older people who are trying to influence new ones and this is, I mean, it is obviously in my department and in other departments as well.

Note: [...] - data (in this appendix) were intentionally removed for ethical reasons
## Appendix 8. Analysis of transcripts (raw coding and initial topics)

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<td>RC_25</td>
<td>Power inequalities</td>
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### Appendix 9. Refined Codes, Themes and References

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<td>Learning as a shared repertoire of doing things</td>
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<td>Situated workplace learning practices in CoPs</td>
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<td>Access to a wide range of resources</td>
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Appendix 10. The final two themes and six sub-themes

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| Theme 1: The origins of participatory practices of academics within CoPs | • Academics’ views on the origins of workplace learning (Chapter 5)   
  • Legitimate peripheral participation in academic communities of practice (Chapter 5)  
  • Existing barriers to situated learning activities within academic CoPs (Chapter 5)  
  • Power relations between novice and ‘old-timer’ academics (Chapter 6) | C_3, C_4  
  C_7, C_9, C_11, C_12  
  C_2, C_10  
  C_5, C_6 |
| Theme 2: Transforming the academic workplace | • Academic roles and career in higher education (Chapter 7)  
  • Insights into academic employment relationship and determinants of academic career success (Chapter 7) | C_1, C_8  
  C_13, C_14, C_15 |
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