Academic growth and development – How do university academics experience it?

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Abstract. This paper reports the outcomes of a study, undertaken from a phenomenographic perspective, of university academics' experiences of their own growth and development, i.e., what it means to them, what they are trying to achieve, how they go about it, why they do things that way … The outcomes presented are based on a series of interviews with teaching and research academics at a research intensive university. The group as a whole showed a range of views of academic development, representing in particular a varying focus on:

- *Academic performance*, in terms of increasing work output, academic standing *or* work quality;
- *Personal learning*, in terms of ongoing accumulation of new knowledge and skills *or* increasing depth of understanding in one's field of study;
- *Disciplinary or social change*, in terms of contributions to one's field of study or a relevant social community.

Implications for our understanding of academic development and academic work are discussed.

Keywords: academic development, faculty development phenomenography, university research, university teaching

Introduction

Scholarly interest in academic development and improvement in performance of academics has been developing as a distinct body of literature and research from the late 1960s and early 1970s onwards. This was part of a larger response to a range of widespread changes affecting higher education, including increasing economic pressures and constraints, rising concerns about the quality of university teaching as a cause of student failure and wastage, and growing societal and governmental concern with accountability and evaluation of academic and institutional performance (Anderson and Eaton 1982a, b; Moses 1988; Kogan et al. 1994; Schuller 1995; Smyth 1995).

One outcome of these developing concerns was the widespread creation in the 1970s of university centres or units for academic development. As a consequence, most of the subsequent research and literature on academic development has focused on the actual or ideal activities and outcomes of

such centres and other centrally organised sources of development. Thus, the existing literature on professional development for academics has very much grown from the perspective of academic development *providers*, in terms of how those engaged in academic development can best work with academic staff (e.g., Foster and Roe 1979; Moses 1988; Zuber-Skerritt 1991, 1992; Brew 1995; Wright and O'Neil 1995; Webb 1996; Lieberman and Wehlburg 2001).

While there is increasing acknowledgment of other sources of professional development support for academics, for instance, institutional and departmental provisions (e.g., Sorcinelli and Aitken 1995; Quinlan and Åkerlind 2000; Cook 2001), this literature still maintains the all pervading focus on development activities and services. When the perspective of academics themselves is brought into the picture, it is considered mainly in terms of their use of and response to different development opportunities, their development needs, and any changes made to their practice as a consequence of engaging in the opportunities presented (e.g., Moses 1988; Zuber-Skerritt 1992, ch. 5; Travis et al. 1996; Murray and Holmes 1997). By contrast, the study presented here investigates the underlying meanings that growing and developing as an academic holds for those engaged in it, i.e., university academics themselves, independently of the perceived sources of development.

To date, the academic development literature has also been strongly focused on one particular aspect of academic work, the development of university teaching. An early overview of academic development activities in Australia illustrates this traditional focus:

> There has been little activity in Australian higher education institutions towards making academic staff better researchers, committee men or administrators. It is generally assumed that research skills are fully acquired before appointment to the staff of a higher education institution; and that to function effectively on a committee or as a head of department depends on experience, on skills learned on the job, perhaps even on personality, but that in any case there is nothing to be taught or 'developed'. (Foster and Roe 1979, p. 17)

Although this no longer holds true in the area of development of academic leadership or management skills, discussion and investigation of development as a researcher are still basically limited to literature on research training as part of postgraduate studies and postdoctoral research (e.g., Thompson et al. 2001). Issues of ongoing development as a researcher throughout an academic career are rarely addressed and the focus on teaching development still predominates. While this focus is again not surprising, if only because most academic development units are concerned entirely or primarily

with the improvement of teaching, it forms another area of limitation in the existing breadth of literature on academic development. It is rare for studies of academic development to take a holistic perspective on development across the range of academic work.

In summary, the current overwhelming focus in the academic development literature on both development *delivery* options and development of *teaching* in particular has ensured that the literature on academic development, while large, has been somewhat limited in focus. The research presented in this paper attempts to rebalance the focus somewhat, with an emphasis on investigating growth and development from the perspective of academic staff *themselves* and a concern for development across all aspects of academic work, viewed *holistically*.

However, to consider academics' experiences of their own growth and development solely in terms of implications for academic development would be to take an unnecessarily limited perspective on the research presented in this paper. Ways of experiencing growing and developing as an academic must also have much to tell us about ways of experiencing being an academic in today's higher education system. This is an area of research which has only recently become topical, spurred by widespread changes in the higher education system.

Commencing with the landmark studies of Burton Clark (1987) and Tony Becher (1989), the study of academia and academic work flourished throughout the 1990s and has now developed into a substantial research area. From the "Decline of Donnish Dominion" (Halsey 1992) to "Making Sense of Academic Life" (Taylor 1999), much of this literature arose in response to recent pressures for change acting upon academia. Associated with this, there has often been a focus in this literature on academic change, in terms of the changing nature of higher education and academics' actual or predicted responses to these changes.

One primary strand of this literature focuses on the social, economic and political forces that have led to recent changes in the nature of higher education. The aim of this strand is to document and explain these changes and their implications for academia. In this literature, historical, comparative and other contextual analyses are described, and/or case studies presented, to help inform our understanding of the nature and causes of these changes, their implications for academics, and/or how academics can best respond to such change. (Kogan et al. 1994; Schuller 1995; Smyth 1995; Cuthbert 1996; Marginson 1997, 2000; Coaldrake and Stedman 1999; Taylor 1999; Martin 1999).

The other primary strand of literature on academia is empirically-based and focuses on analysing the self-reports of academics themselves. These

studies have most commonly been conducted from a sociological perspective, with a focus on investigating academic attitudes, values and demographic profiles. Rarely, there is a more phenomenological approach to exploring the nature of academia, with in-depth descriptions and reflections from individuals on their own experiences as an academic (Frost and Taylor 1996; Axtell 1998), or a more anthropological analysis of academic cultures (Becher 1989; Bergquist 1992, 1994).

Nevertheless, by far the most common approach taken to the study of academics has been attitudinal questionnaire surveys, where academics are usually asked to provide fixed-choice responses to predetermined questions (Boyer 1989, 1990; Halsey 1992; Everett and Entrekin 1994; Boyer et al. 1994; Altbach 1996; Potts 1997; Adams 1998; McInnis 2000; Thompson et al. 2001), In addition, a number of studies have made use of interviews, allowing more in-depth exploration of academics' views (Clark 1987; Becher 1989; Boice 1992; Trowler 1998; Potts 1997; Thompson et al. 2001). As a group, these studies focus on demographic profiles of academics, academic values, and academic attitudes towards teaching and research, work environment and job satisfaction. Common patterns of findings across these studies include:

Academic values – Intellectual freedom and academic autonomy appear to be core values for most academics. Disciplinary colleagues are typically seen as an important source of intellectual stimulation and most academics report greater affiliation to their discipline or field than to their institution. In general, academics continue to be primarily motivated by the traditional values of intellectual scholarship and exploration of ideas, both for their own sake and for societal advancement. While many academics feel that higher education should help solve basic social problems, at the same time they feel a general sense of lack of social influence and of falling social status in the community. Although many academics are concerned by what is often perceived as relatively low salaries and job security, most are more strongly motivated by intrinsic interest in their work than by material rewards. The opportunity to pursue their own academic interests is typically still the most important factor in their reported level of job satisfaction.

Teaching and research – Although there is substantial variation amongst academics in whether they feel a greater commitment to teaching or research, or an equal commitment to both, the majority still tend to be research-oriented. However, despite the widespread commitment to research, research productivity is commonly low. A small minority of academics produce most of the publications and obtain

most of the research funding. Research productivity tends to be greater amongst those academics who report a high commitment to research, who are men, and who are in more prestigious research universities. Moreover, most academics feel that promotion and tenure is more strongly dependent upon research output than teaching quality, and that quantity of publications is more important than quality. Research-oriented academics with high productivity are more likely to feel satisfied with their work than teaching-oriented academics.

Working environment – University governance is seen as becoming increasingly hierarchical and managerial, which conflicts with many academics desire for a more collegial environment. There is also widespread dissatisfaction amongst academics with the perceived lack of institutional resources to support research and teaching. There is a general sense that salaries have not kept up with inflation, and there tends to be dissatisfaction with salary levels and pessimism about future promotion and employment prospects. Furthermore, working conditions are frequently perceived as steadily deteriorating, with associated increases in stress and workload. Many academics are experiencing increasing fragmentation of work time and energy, and a sense of reduced control over their work due to the perceived intrusion of administration and other 'non-core' activities into academic work.

This summary of the literature reflects the primarily sociological perspective taken in the existing research on academics and academic work, with a focus on investigating academic attitudes and values. In contrast, this paper provides the opportunity to explore the underlying meaning for academics of the work they are engaged in, as reflected in their experiences of growing and developing as an academic. This focus on experienced meaning is in line with the phenomenographic perspective taken in this study, as described in the following section of the paper.

Methodology

This study builds on the phenomenographic tradition of educational research (Marton 1981, 1986; Marton and Booth 1997). Research within this tradition initially focused on investigating students' learning *from the perspective of students themselves* (Ramsden 1992; Marton and Booth 1997; Prosser and Trigwell 1999). An awareness of the meanings, or range of meanings, that learning has for students and the intentionality with which students approach their studies was seen as an essential component in advancing

our understanding of the nature of student learning. More recently, this research approach has extended into investigating university teaching *from the perspective of teachers themselves*, examining academics' conceptions of and approaches to teaching (Kember 1997; Åkerlind and Jenkins 1998; Prosser and Trigwell 1999, ch. 7; Wood 2000). As with the research into student learning, a core assumption underlying these studies is of the importance of understanding the meanings of teaching, as experienced by university teachers, and the intentional nature with which academics approach their teaching.

This paper is based on the same underlying principles as the research into students' perceptions of their own learning and academics' perceptions of their own teaching, i.e., that investigating perceptions of academic growth and development *from the perspective of academics themselves* will enhance our understanding of the nature of academic development, and thus provide insight into improving approaches to academic development.

As with all phenomenographic research, the aim of this study was to investigate variation in the underlying meaning of, or ways of understanding, a phenomenon. The phenomenon investigated in this study was growth and development as a university academic, and the desired outcome was constitution of a structured 'space' of variation. The resulting 'outcome space' represents key aspects of the qualitatively different ways of viewing growth and development amongst the sample group interviewed. The structure of the outcome space is based on the *logical relationships* between those different views, in terms of the *critical aspects* of variation which both link and separate the different meanings to and from each other. (As is common with phenomenographic research, I use terms such as meanings, understandings, experience, awareness, perceptions, views, etc. interchangeably.)

Research aims

The aims of phenomenographic research have certain implications for approaches to data collection and analysis that together distinguish phenomenography from other qualitative research traditions, as outlined below.

  Related, not independent meanings – During the data analysis, the different meanings that emerge are not constituted independently, but in relation to each other. Each meaning may be regarded as a fragment of human understanding of the whole phenomenon, "... the meaning of one bit derived from the meaning of and lending meaning to the rest". (Marton and Booth 1997, p. 124). It is argued that individuals experience the world differently because human experience is always *partial*. At any one point in time and context, people manage to discern and experience

different aspects of a phenomenon to different degrees. Hence, "the limited number of qualitatively different ways in which something is experienced can be understood in terms of which constituent parts or aspects are discerned and appear simultaneously in people's awareness" (Marton and Booth 1997, p. 107).

This leads to the expectation that different ways of experiencing or understanding a phenomenon would typically be logically related – related through the phenomenon being experienced and through the inherently (i.e., physiologically and socially) related nature of human experience. Consequently, one would expect that the qualitatively different ways of experiencing a phenomenon constituted during a phenomenographic analysis would typically represent more or less *complete* understandings of the phenomenon, rather than different and unrelated understandings. These different understandings may then be ordered in terms of complexity or completeness.

Awareness, not beliefs – From a phenomenographic perspective, different ways of understanding a phenomenon may be categorised according to the awareness shown of key aspects or dimensions of the phenomenon, where awareness of an aspect is indicated by the perception of the *potential for variation* in that aspect (Martin and Booth 1997). Lack of awareness of an aspect is indicated by an implicit, taken-for-granted assumption of uniformity in that aspect of the phenomenon. This focus also feeds into the phenomenographic search for more and less complete or complex understandings of a phenomenon, where more complex understandings are indicated by an increasing *breadth of awareness* of different aspects of the phenomenon being investigated.

Context-sensitive awareness, not stable constructs – Although individuals may show a tendency towards one particular way of understanding a phenomenon, the different ways of understanding constituted in a phenomenographic analysis are seen as inherently context-sensitive in nature. This means that the same individual may experience the same phenomenon differently under different circumstances. The meaning of a phenomenon for an individual is constituted on the basis of their capability for experiencing the phenomenon, that is, the range of aspects of the phenomenon that they have *at some time* experienced, and the specific aspects of the phenomenon highlighted or perceived as most relevant in their *current* contextual circumstances.

Interpretive, not explanatory focus – The key aim of phenomenographic research is descriptive or interpretive rather than explanatory, i.e., to

investigate *what sort of* differences in meaning and understanding occur across individuals rather than to attempt to explain or investigate *causes of* these differences. Consequently, the interview sample is selected to be representative of the population in terms of *qualitative variation* in experience, using demographic criteria that one would expect to be associated with different ways of experiencing the phenomenon concerned. However, there is *no* expectation that the frequency distribution of ways of experiencing constituted from the sample would be representative of the distribution in the population represented by the sample, and the sample is not selected for this purpose.

Collective, not individual experience – Associated with the relational focus taken in phenomenographic research is a focus on collective, not individual, human experience. In other words, although the research data involves collection of descriptions of individual experiences (as the collective view can only be accessed via individual views), the data analyses and research outcomes do not emphasise the experience of individual interviewees, but rather the collective experience of the interview group *as a whole*. Each interview transcript is considered, not in isolation, but in comparison to the other transcripts in the sample, and each way of understanding a phenomenon constituted during the data analysis is always developed in relation to other ways of understanding that phenomenon evident across all of the interview transcripts as a collective group.

Stripped, not rich descriptions – The descriptions of different ways of experiencing that result from phenomenographic analysis are often called 'stripped' or 'reduced' descriptions because they represent a way of experiencing reduced to its *key critical features*. Rather than focusing on the endless variation inherent in the richness of individual experience, phenomenographic research focuses on identifying what is critical for distinguishing one way of experiencing from a qualitatively different way, in terms of the minimum features necessary for drawing such distinctions.

This focus on critical aspects of meaning facilitates the search for logical relationships between different meanings. Highlighting such relationships provides a way of looking at the phenomenon holistically, despite the fact that it may be experienced differently. The aim is to simultaneously portray the whole as well as the parts in a single outcome space of variation. This is seen as having powerful heuristic value in aiding our understanding of the phenomenon.

Research methods

For this study, 28 academics were interviewed. All of the interviewees were on teaching and research appointments at a traditional research intensive university in Australia. Within this institutional context, the academics interviewed were selected to represent as much variation as possible, being from varied disciplines, cultural backgrounds and gender, with varying levels of experience as an academic, and on varying conditions of appointment:

- *Discipline* – 6 from social sciences, 2 economics/commerce, 8 natural sciences, 8 humanities/languages, 4 information sciences;
- *Academic experience* – a few months to approx. 35 years;
- *Appointment* – 12 tenured/tenureable appointments, 12 fixed-term (3–5 years), 4 short-term (12 months);
- *Gender* – 18 men, 10 women;
- *Age range* – mid-20s to late-50s;
- *Language background* – 20 native English speakers (including Australia, North America and New Zealand), 8 from non-English speaking backgrounds (4 European/Russian, 2 Middle Eastern, 2 Asian);
- *Classification level* – 5 Level A appointments, 12 Level B, 11 Level C.

Academics appointed at Australian Academic Classification Levels A–C were selected for interview. These levels are based on a nation-wide classificatory scale of A–E, where Levels A and B are academic career entry-level appointments (though promotion from A to B is also possible) and Level C typically represents a mid to final career appointment, achieved through promotion from Level B or appointment to Level C after holding a Level B position. Levels D and E appointments (not included in the sample) are achieved on the basis of exemplary performance, so only a minority of academics in Australia can expect to be promoted to those levels. By contrast, most Australian academics can expect to be promoted to Level C at some stage in their career. However, Level C is still regarded as a senior level, and many Heads of Department with academic leadership responsibilities are on a Level C appointment. Some of the Level C academics interviewed for this study were in the final stages of their career while others were at mid-career level with expectations of being promoted to Levels D and E in the future.

To the extent that the variation within the sample reflects the variation within the desired population – in this case, university academics – it is expected that the *range* of meanings within the sample will be representative of the *range* of meanings within the population. This sample is limited by the fact that participants are drawn entirely from the one institution. However, many of the participants had previously worked in other universities in Australia and internationally.

Interviews were semi-structured, asking academics what growth and development meant to them, how they went about it, what they were trying to achieve, why they did things that way …, but working primarily off of examples of development activities volunteered by the interviewees during the course of the interview. To provide a context for these questions, participants were first asked to talk about what they did as an academic more generally. This was seen as providing an important frame for the subsequent interview questions on their experiences of growing and developing as an academic.

Unstructured follow-up questions were used to encourage further elaboration of the topic or to check the meaning that interviewees' associated with key words that they used. These questions commonly took the form of, "Could you tell me a bit more about that?", "Could you explain that further?", "What do you mean by that?", "Could you give me an example?". In many cases the follow-up questions were more important in eliciting underlying meanings than the pre-determined questions. However, the aim at all times was to provide opportunities for the interviewees to reveal their current experience of the phenomenon as fully as possible without the interviewer introducing any new aspects not previously mentioned by the interviewee. The interviews were typically 60–90 minutes in duration.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. As the researcher, I then analysed the interviews in an iterative manner, repeatedly reading through transcripts, searching for the underlying foci and intentions expressed in them, comparing and contrasting them for similarities and differences, and looking for key structural relationships which related as well as distinguished them to and from each other. As I started to constitute key meanings, dimensions of variation and relationships within the data, I proceeded to iterate between alternately focusing on the analytic outcomes and the original transcript data, looking to confirm, contradict and modify my emerging hypotheses about meanings and relationships. (See Åkerlind 2002, for more detailed descriptions of approaches to phenomenographic analysis.) This continued until a consistent set of categories of description, representing different meanings or ways of understanding academic growth and development, eventuated.

Outcomes

The outcomes of phenomenographic analysis may be reported in two interrelated ways, through:

1. descriptions of key aspects of the variation in experience, i.e., 'categories of description', representing the range of qualitatively different ways

of experiencing the phenomenon in question, in this case, academic growth and development. These categories represent the collective range of *meanings* which make up the outcome space.

2. descriptions of common themes of variation running through the categories, which mark aspects of similarity and difference between the categories (and thus between different ways of experiencing the phenomenon) and allow the relationships between the categories to be elaborated. These themes mark the *structure* of the outcome space, by delineating logical relationships between the categories.

Focusing on different aspects of the variation in experience at different times provides a way of more clearly elucidating the complexity of the data.

Categories of description – key variations in meaning

Six categories of description, representing key aspects of the variation in meanings and experience constituted from the interview transcripts, emerged from the analysis. A brief description of each category is outlined below.

1. Development as becoming more productive and efficient in one's work output;
2. Development as achieving academic credibility and recognition for one's work;
3. Development as ongoing improvements in the quality and effectiveness of one's work;
4. Development as the ongoing accumulation of personal knowledge and skills;
5. Development as increasing depth and sophistication of understanding in one's field;
6. Development as contributing to disciplinary growth or social change.

As will become clear in the section on relationships between the categories (below), the six different ways of experiencing academic development are also seen as linked in a hierarchical relationship based on inclusivity or relative completeness. That is, the experience of growth and development represented by later categories includes awareness of aspects of growth and development represented by earlier categories, but *not* vice versa. In this sense, while each additional category has elements in common with previous categories, they also represent something new in the experience of growing and developing as an academic.

Each category is described in more detail below, with a brief illustration of key aspects of the categories through verbatim quotes from relevant interview transcripts. It is impossible for such brief quotes to illustrate all aspects of the category described, but I hope that they provide a more concrete sense of the

nature of the category than would be possible from an abstract description alone.

1. Development as becoming more productive and efficient in one's work output

This category represents an experience of growth and development which is focused on a quantitative increase in work productivity. This increase is seen as occurring through increased work efficiency, i.e., through a change in the input:output ratio. Increased productivity can take two forms, either an *increased output* from the same input of time and effort or the same output from a *reduced input* of time and effort. There is no sense of a perceived or anticipated change in the nature or quality of work produced, simply the quantity produced per unit of time and effort. In addition, there appears to be an anticipated end-point or plateau to this development, a rate of productivity which feels (or would feel) appropriate and after which no further efficiency gains are seen as necessary. The following quote illustrates key aspects of the category:

> . . . what I'm aiming for is an increase in scientific productivity along my research lines. If that does increase then I would feel that I'm fulfilling my role better. As far as teaching goes I look forward to the day when teaching a course isn't hard and does not occupy such a large fraction of my time. – male, Physics, level A academic

2. Development as achieving academic credibility and recognition for one's work

While a concern with performance efficiency and productivity is also part of the experience of Category 2, the primary focus in this Category is on achieving credibility as an academic. This includes feeling comfortable and confident with one's performance as an academic, clarifying one's personal role or agenda as an academic, and feeling established and accepted within one's department and amongst a network of colleagues. Achieving this may involve experiential changes on the part of the individual academic, or simply that their existing qualities become recognised. There may or may not be a concern with promotion. As in Category 1, there is clear sense of a developmental plateau which has been or could be reached, this time in terms of acceptance and respect as an academic. To illustrate,

> I see myself over the years as having, over time, having become a lot more confident about myself. I think I have always been confident in taking language classes, so that was okay in the classroom. Once I came out of the classroom, I wasn't confident of myself in the company of

professors, all these people who had been in the department for 30 years and so on. . . . And then they began to see that I was a person who could do things, you know, and it has always annoyed me, because I felt that I could always do these things, it was just that they were not recognising them. But over the years, gradually my skills have been recognised, and that has been good, as far as teaching is concerned. But as far as research is concerned, the battle was really with myself, rather than with the way I perceived the department. I had to learn to give papers at conferences and go public with ideas, and I didn't enjoy that. . . . The only way in which I have met people is through a particular conference . . . I really do need that kind of support from these people who are in contact with me now to make me feel like someone . . . because I haven't and didn't have a public face. – female, Classics, level C academic

3. Development as ongoing improvements in the quality and effectiveness of one's work

While this category also represents a focus on academic performance (as with the previous two categories), in this case the emphasis is on qualitative improvements in work effectiveness, primarily as perceived by the individual academic him/herself. While the potential for quantitative changes is acknowledged (as in Category 1), unlike the first Category there is a clear emphasis on development as an academic involving doing something different, not just more of the same. While academic colleagues are seen as providing a source of feedback on the quality of the academic's performance (as in Category 2) unlike Category 2 other sources of feedback are valued equally to that provided by colleagues, including the opinion of the individual academic him/herself. In contrast to Categories 1 and 2, where the potential for academic development was seen as having an obvious plateau or end-point, in Category 3 the potential for development is seen as endless and ongoing. To illustrate,

> I think I am already a good academic but I want to continue to be a good academic and maybe improve all the time if it is possible. That means keeping up with the literature, revising what you are doing, searching, looking around you at what other people are doing. I ask colleagues and students what they think of what I'm doing. I publish and have colleagues confirm if they think what I am doing is worthwhile . . . If I know that I'm doing a good job, and students and academics appreciate what I'm doing, then I feel happier within myself . . .
>
> I think that unless you become stale, and that sometimes happens unfortunately, if you keep striving and keep searching for better ways, or keep assessing what you are doing, asking others to assess what you are doing.

> ... Then you do keep growing and I think that gradually everything becomes more integrated and flows back and forth from one area to the other and you become more experienced and you should be able to know more clearly what works and what doesn't work. I really think it's very important that you never stop. ... I think that to be a good academic you need to continue researching and searching and assessing what you are doing for the rest of your life. – female, Languages, level B academic

4. Development as the ongoing accumulation of personal knowledge and skills

In the previous three categories, the focus has been on academic development experienced as a change in different aspects of one's external performance as an academic. With Category 4, growth and development is experienced as a more internal change. While changes in academic performance are also acknowledged (as in the first three categories), the focus of the experience of development is on personal learning outcomes for the individual, in terms of an expansion or increase in their personal knowledge and/or skills. There is a certain quantitative element to this experience, with a strong emphasis on accumulating knowledge and skills, and continuously adding to an existing repertoire. To illustrate,

> I'd like to be able to expand the areas of research in which I work. I've never been particularly driven to be a professor by the time I'm forty or things like that. I like to chase what I'm interested in at the time. ... I have changed the area of discipline in which I have worked three or four times. I like that. I'm very broad, both in terms of work experience and research interests. ... ... Adding different things to my portfolio of experience. ... Growing in terms of, yes, adding to new experiences, learning from other experiences and adding them into the way you do your work. Whether its teaching and/or research or both or whatever. But also I would like to try and do some new research things and it would be nice to do some new teaching things. – female, Anthropology, level B academic

5. Development as increasing depth and sophistication in understanding of one's field

Although this category maintains a focus on growing and developing as a form of personal learning or internal expansion (as with the previous Category), it also includes awareness of more qualitative as well as quantitative changes, by way of developing increasing understanding or comprehension of particular teaching and research areas. The emphasis is on seeing differently, not just seeing more, with a focus on the accumulation of knowledge and skills around a particular area leading to the development of

different perspectives, different ways of understanding or different ways of viewing that area. To illustrate,

> Personally, for me it involves becoming more sophisticated in my science. Becoming a better archaeologist, more capable of comprehending archaeological material. It involves acquiring material that is more powerful, whether that's becoming better at statistics or reading, and pursuing some additional explanatory models, whatever that might represent. ... It's fairly clear to me that I am circulating amongst a series of issues which for me are very important. So I keep coming back to them. But I think that in most instances I keep coming back at a more sophisticated level. I don't think it's a directional thing. I'm not going anywhere except acquiring extra skills in what I do. – male, Archaeology, level B academic

This category may be contrasted with Category 3, which also emphasised developmental changes of a qualitative nature. However, in Category 3 the emphasis was on external changes in academic performance, with a primary focus on discovering what works and doesn't work, leading to more effective ways of doing one's job as an academic. In Category 5, the focus of developmental changes is more internal, by way of growth in personal understanding. Put simply, in Category 3, the growth of the individual is most apparent in their ability to *do* things differently, while in Category 5 it is most apparent in their ability to *see* things differently (although the potential for changes in performance is also acknowledged).

6. Development as contributing to disciplinary growth or social change

This Category represents a significant expansion in the experience of academic growth to include an impact beyond the self. In addition to awareness of academic development as involving change in one's work performance and personal learning, there is now a focus on development as a contribution to change in one's discipline and/or relevant social community. To illustrate,

> ... the better the teaching. It's tricky. I've been thinking about this. When I think about enhancing students' education, I think about the implications of this for the discipline. ... There is a strong idea that runs through the way that I think about teaching which relates to improvement of the discipline. The production of good archaeologists. ... What I think provides a good measure [*of teaching quality*] is the quality of the students who are going on. ...
> ... But how do you measure your rate of progress [*in research*]? I think it's an internal thing. I think that it's a feeling that I look at what I'm

doing and I think: 'Now this is good. This is a good quality thing. I'm getting to the heart of the issue here'. . . . It means I have identified the key component of whatever I'm talking about. That's what I mean by 'good'. But how world shattering that is is much more difficult to measure. . . . It's not something that is easy to tell except in retrospect. It's not always clear if what you have done is developing the discipline except in retrospect. That is the definition that I've used. At some level I guess I would be measuring it as a contribution to the discipline. – male, Archaeology, level B academic

Relationships between the categories – structure of the variation

To help deal with the complexity of the data, the description of structural relationships between categories (below) has been largely separated from the description of the meaning represented by each category (above), even though they have been constituted in an interrelated way. The focus on structural relationships provides the opportunity to look at the variation in meaning holistically, although this requires reducing each category to a minimal description of key aspects of the variation.

The six qualitatively different ways of experiencing academic growth and development described above were marked by variation along the following five key themes of expanding awareness, which served to both link and separate the different categories (see Table 1):

- *Breadth of impact of developmental changes*, with a varying focus amongst the categories on changes in: academic performance (Categories 1, 2 and 3); personal learning (Categories 4 and 5); and disciplinary/social change (Category 6). This variation represents an increasing expansion in the perceived breadth of impact of developmental change, starting with a focus on changes in what the academic does or how they are perceived (academic performance), expanding to include a focus on changes within the academic themselves in terms of their knowledge, skills or understanding (personal learning), and then to a focus that goes beyond the individual to include a larger community (disciplinary or social change).
- *Potential for developmental change*, in terms of there being a perceived natural end-point or plateau to development that has been or could be reached (Categories 1 and 2) or the perception of an endless potential for development (Categories 3–6).
- *Source of validation that development has occurred*, with a focus on external, colleague-based validation (Categories 1 and 2), expanding to include a focus on internal, self-based validation (Categories 3–6).

- *Nature of developmental changes*, with a recursive shift between categories in whether development is experienced as quantitative or both qualitative and quantitative in nature. In the three categories representing a focus on academic performance, there was a shift between Categories 1 to 3 from a quantitative to primarily qualitative focus on development. This shift is again seen in the two categories representing a focus on personal learning, with Category 4 returning to a focus on development as primarily quantitative in nature and Category 5 repeating the shift to a primarily qualitative focus, but this time in terms of development as personal learning. Category 6, representing a focus on disciplinary or societal change, maintains the emphasis on development experienced as primarily qualitative in nature, but this time in terms of development as a contribution.
- *Feelings underlying the development*, with a shift between categories from more inward focused, limiting feelings to include more outward focused, expanding feelings. Categories 1 and 2 emphasise negative feelings to be avoided, by way of a focus on relieving work anxiety through increasing one's productivity, and relieving a sense of inadequacy through external validation of one's achievements. Category 3 also emphasises the importance of being seen to do a good job in order to feel good about oneself, but there is a more expanding focus on a positive sense of satisfaction that comes from knowing that one is working effectively. Categories 4 and 5 further emphasise positive feelings to be sought after, rather than negative feelings to be avoided, with a shift in focus towards a sense of expanding and extending oneself, respectively, and associated feelings of interest and challenge. Category 6 highlights feelings that go beyond personal enjoyment to include a more altruistic focus on ethics, integrity and sharing with others.

The six different ways of experiencing academic development are seen as linked in a hierarchical relationship based on inclusivity. That is, the experience of growth and development represented by later categories (i.e., those higher in the hierarchy) includes awareness of aspects of growth and development represented by earlier categories (i.e., those lower in the hierarchy). In this sense, the categories also represent a hierarchy of increasing complexity or completeness in awareness of different aspects of academic growth and development.

Empirical evidence of hierarchically inclusive relationships

The hierarchical nature of the relationships between the categories and the ordering of categories within the hierarchies emerged through an iterative

Table 1. Key aspects of the range of variation in ways of experiencing growing and developing as an academic

Themes of expanding awareness	Category					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Work productivity	Academic standing	Work Quality	Breadth of knowl/skills	Depth of underst'ing	Contribution to field, etc.
Breadth of impact	Academic performance	Academic performance	Academic performance	Performance and personal learning	Performance and personal learning	Performance, learning and disciplinary change
Development potential	End-Point	End-Point	Endless	Endless	Endless	Endless
Source of validation	External	External	External and internal	External and internal	External and internal	External and internal
Nature of development	Quantitative	Quantitative and qualitative	Quantitative and qualitative	Quantitative	Quantitative and qualitative	Quantitative and qualitative
Underlying feelings	Avoiding negative feelings	Avoiding negative feelings	Avoidance and seeking positive feelings	Avoidance and seeking positive feelings	Avoidance and seeking positive feelings	Avoidance, seeking and sharing altruistically

process, involving an interactive alternation between searching for logical and empirical evidence of inclusiveness. That is, hypotheses about likely orderings and inclusiveness sometimes originated from logical argument and sometimes from the content of transcripts, but in all cases needed to be confirmed by the transcription data before being accepted.

Logical evidence is represented in the constitution of the key themes of expanding awareness in experience that run through each of the categories and represent a hierarchical expansion across categories in awareness of the potential for variation in that aspect of the phenomenon. In line with this, each category of description represents a unique combination of different levels or 'dimensions of variation', along each theme of awareness (see Table 1). Empirical confirmation required evidence that at least some of the transcripts from which particular categories of description were constituted showed some reference to aspects of growth and development present in categories lower in the hierarchy, but *not* vice versa.

The excerpts from interview transcripts that were presented above were selected primarily to emphasise the different foci of each category, not the inclusive nature of the relationships (or similar foci) between categories. Consequently, further excerpts are presented below, this time with a focus on illustrating how the experience of academic development represented by categories higher in the proposed hierarchy of expanding awareness includes aspects of the experience represented by categories lower in the hierarchy. It is hoped that these quotes give a sense of the type of data regarded as providing evidence of inclusiveness, though such brief quotes cannot possibly represent the full range of evidence present in the transcripts.

1. Development as becoming more productive and efficient in one's work output

> I guess I see it [growing and developing] as producing more . . . I guess trying to get better organised. I think I am still trying to organise my time. . . . I would feel more relaxed because I would know at the end of the day I will be able to do what I wanted to do, and so, if you're more relaxed, your output would increase. – female, Mathematics, level C academic [This is the Category lowest in the hierarchy – author's note.]

2. Development as achieving academic credibility and recognition for one's work

> In terms of growth, the first few years were just surviving for me . . . Getting a bit more proactive, I suppose, about ensuring that they know I'm there. . . . I guess, ultimately, I feel pretty comfortable as an academic. I suppose because I feel comfortable with my fulfilling of my

role as an academic. . . . *I think I could do it better if I had more time* or whatever, but, you know, I think I do it pretty well. And then, I guess, I got there simply by exploring different ways of doing things. That last part out of necessity, but just, you know, *having to become more effective with less time and resources to do essentially the same thing.* – male, Forestry, level C academic [Author's italics – highlighting references in the quote to the primary focus of the previous category.]

3. Development as ongoing improvements in the quality and effectiveness of one's work

I think I am already a good academic but I want to continue to be a good academic and maybe improve all the time if it is possible. That means keeping up with the literature, revising what you are doing, searching, looking around you at what other people are doing. I ask colleagues and students what they think of what I'm doing. *I publish and have colleagues confirm if they think what I am doing is worthwhile . . .* If I know that I'm doing a good job, and students and *academics appreciate what I'm doing*, then I feel happier within myself . . . – female, languages, level B academic [Author's italics – highlighting references in the quote to the primary focus of the previous category.]

4. Development as the ongoing accumulation of personal knowledge and skills

Personally, I see academic work as really a very unique situation where you are allowed quite a lot of freedom to pursue your intellectual interests, and I see my personal growth as being pretty much tied to that . . . As a teacher I am also quite interested in teaching techniques, if you like, or *being a good teacher. So, trying different things out, designing stuff and giving workshops and reading stuff when I get time.* I see that as quite a long-term development. . . . As a researcher I view all these things as life-time education things, and *I am just constantly trying to get better at it.* So, as a researcher I am trying to expand my repertoire of research techniques. – male, Psychology, level B academic [Author's italics – highlighting references in the quote to the primary focus of the previous category.]

5. Development as increasing depth and sophistication of understanding in one's field

. . . So, there is the repertoire, tool-kit thing. There is also another aspect which I don't know quite what to call it but I would think of it in terms of

depth of comprehension – the degree to which you can perceive under-lying implicit elements rather than the superficial reading. I think that they are quite separate things. *In my mind you can have a tool-kit and be quite superficial.* I think that there are those two things. One is the level at which you deal with it and *the other is the range of things that you bring to bear on it.* – male, Archaeology, level B academic [Author's italics – highlighting references in the quote to the primary focus of the previous category.]

6. Development as contributing to disciplinary growth or social change

> . . . Growing is at two levels. One is a personal level and that's: *'Because I'm good at mostly the same thing, am I better at analysing artefacts than I was 20 years ago?'* That is one way which I might think about it. The other issue of growth is the degree to which what I'm doing enhances the growth of the discipline. They are in some ways clearly different but I connect them up a lot. I see them as being related. I would be dealing with growth at those two levels. *Increased sophistication* and institu-tional strength of the discipline. – male, Archaeology, level B academic [Author's italics – highlighting references in the quote to the primary focus of the previous category.]

Unfortunately, the quotes presented create an impression of the different aspects of ways of experiencing academic development combining in an additive, multistructural way, rather than in an integrated, holistic way. This is an artefact of the practical need to select concise quotes that illustrate the inclusive nature of the relationships between categories within a small number of sentences. It is important to emphasise here that experience occurs holistically. Consequently, although each category may be presented as consisting of a combination of different aspects, this is for descriptive and analytic purposes. The experience represented by each category of descrip-tion would be a holistic one, and necessarily different to the sum of its parts or aspects.

Individual vignettes

Given the hierarchical relationships between the different ways of under-standing academic growth and development which emerged from this study, one might be tempted to imagine academics as engaged in a relatively linear progression over time between different understandings, perhaps related to career stage, academic status, etc. However, this does not take into account the role of situational or environmental factors, nor personal differences in how

academics view their work. This is illustrated below, through the presentation of brief vignettes of individual academics selected from the interview sample.

Development as becoming more productive and efficient in one's work output

Two vignettes of academics experiencing their growth and development in the least complex way found in this study, that is, as increasing performance productivity and efficiency, are presented below. They illustrate how essentially the *same* understanding of their own development may be experienced by academics at different career stages, in different disciplines, tenured and non-tenured, of different gender, and with different priorities given to teaching versus research.

Louise (pseudonym) is a tenured, recently promoted Level C academic in Mathematics. She is European and came to Australia to undertake her doctorate, which was followed by postdoctoral positions in both Europe and Australia. She has primarily a research background, but has been teaching for the past three years. She has found the integration of teaching with research difficult, and appears stressed and exhausted by the associated workload pressures:

> It is a fine balance between teaching and doing research, and just trying to do your best in both fields, basically. And sometimes it is not easy. Because the students can be very demanding, because the course can be demanding to prepare and research doesn't always work the way you want it to go. ... I would like to have more free time and free time for myself. ... I don't really go on holiday, ever, and I can't afford getting sick.

Nevertheless, she enjoys her work, both teaching and research:

> I do enjoy my work ... I like teaching, I like the contact with students, I think it is very important. I think people who only do research, they do miss out on a lot, and I do like research as well. ... [However,] teaching time doesn't leave much time for research, then you have to try and squeeze them both in. ... It is really tiring.

Clearly, Louise is experiencing substantial workload stress, and this is reflected in her developmental focus, which is on increasing productivity and efficiency:

> I guess I see it [growing and developing] just as producing more. I guess trying to get better organised. I am still trying to organise my time.

Jim (pseudonym) is a Level A academic in Physics on a fixed-term (three year) contract. He is North American, and completed his doctorate and postdoctoral work there. After five years working in an applied government research position, he took up his current position. He is in the first year of this appointment, and this is his first teaching position. He describes his work as "a job" and focuses on the requirements for performing satisfactorily in this job:

> At first I thought, it's just a job. . . . I expected to come here and work pretty much as I had been, but teaching a course at the same time. What it has meant since I've been here is that when I got here there was no work waiting for me to fall into in the lab. And I had to start writing a [research] proposal before I even got here. So far I haven't had much work funded. And this semester the teaching load is quite heavy.

He prefers research to teaching:

> I was really hired to bring in external funding. . . . I am not a very enthusiastic teacher, and so what I'm doing is basically I'm trying to put enough effort into teaching to get through the material and not have the students whinge a whole lot. . . . There's lots of stuff I'd rather do than teach.

Jim appears to be experiencing anxiety about the degree to which he is currently fulfilling his work role and meeting the requirements expected of him:

> I think the basic aim is to keep my job. OK? I won't keep my job if I don't get external funding.

Reflecting this anxiety, his developmental focus is on better fulfilling his role as an academic, through increased productivity and efficiency. This is seen as involving an increase in research productivity – "actually getting some experiments done, some data analysed and more results of some significance" – and having less time devoted to teaching – "when teaching a course isn't hard and doesn't occupy such a large fraction of my time".

Development as contributing to disciplinary growth or social change

Two vignettes of academics experiencing their growth and development in the most complex way found in this study, that is, as a contribution to their discipline or society, are presented below. They illustrate how the same understanding of their own development as an academic may be experienced

by academics at different career stages, in different disciplines, tenured and non-tenured, with different priorities given to teaching versus research, etc.

Paul (pseudonym) is a tenured Level C academic in Archeology. He has recently moved to his current position after some 10 years working at another university. He is Australian and has spent his career to date working in Australia. He is an experienced university teacher and researcher, and has previously been a Head of Department. He thinks of himself as an archeologist rather than an academic, and his primary goal is to develop the discipline in Australia:

> So, most of my thinking is about pursuing archaeology, either in terms of research or teaching or something else, rather than being a sub-set of academia. . . . I guess that I'm saying my experience is that I clearly have an allegiance to a discipline which supersedes an allegiance to anything else. . . . When I applied here . . . the theme that I took was growing Australian archaeology.

While he sees archeology as more about research than teaching, he believes teaching is also essential in order to develop the discipline:

> At one level, archeology is clearly not teaching. . . . I think being an archeologist is doing archeological research . . . [However,] the pursuit of research without the pursuit of encouraging the next generation is very short term. It will lead to the development of nothing beyond your own career.

His focus on developing the discipline is reflected in his view of his own growth and development as contributing to this disciplinary development:

> At some level I guess I would be measuring it [growth and development] as a contribution to the discipline. . . . Growing is at two levels. One is a personal level . . . The other issue of growth is the degree to which what I'm doing enhances the growth of the discipline. They are in some ways clearly different but I connect them up a lot. I see them as being related. I would be dealing with growth at those two levels. Increased sophistication [in his own ability as an archeologist] and institutional strength of the discipline.

Lawrence (pseudonym) is a Level B academic in Cultural Studies on a fixed-term (three year) contract. He is from the Middle East, and is in the first year of his first mainstream academic appointment, having previously worked as a tutor following his PhD. He prefers to be referred to as a lecturer or

teacher than an academic, as he feels the latter term has developed "negative connotations in certain circles" of society:

> And it is an elitist term as well. I think this is the problem with where the university is heading, separate from society, separate from people. Whereas when I say I am teaching, I am lecturing, I feel I am involved in the dynamic [with society].

He sees himself as engaged in a larger "cultural project", of which his academic work is a part. His teaching and research contribute equally to this 'project':

> I see myself as having a role, a position on lots of things. And one of them is my commitment to anti-orientalism, how I make people [students in his courses] come to grips with their own stereotypes and prejudice and bias. . . . Then it becomes not just my project, I make it their project and their mission to, if you want, deconstruct it and be aware of it, become very much in touch with it and combat it. . . . So I've got myself a cultural project which comes from my personal philosophy. Essentially I'm a humanist and I'm devoted to that. So my research revolves around that – understanding how cultures and religions and political thought and political philosophy and ethics are anchored in societies and cultures.

This focus on a project of cultural change which is larger than himself and larger than his work is reflected in his developmental focus. He experiences growth and development in terms of continuously contributing to awareness of "reductionism" in cultural perspectives and ideas.

> And that's really why, as scholars, when you look at another piece of work, that you engage and say, well, there is reductionism here and this could have been done better and that guy is not aware of this viewpoint or this culture has some response to this . . . There's so much that can be covered that no single mind really can cover it. . . . It [growth and development] is about how you learn and how you could pass on that learning; how you could share it – because share is I think more positive because others are sharing their perspective and ideas with you as well, so it's a two way thing. . . . It's really about commitment. I'm committed to that ideal . . . committed to study learning, to the ideal of learning and to go on giving eminence to the poor countries when we teach and lecture because I'm committed to that.

Discussion

As illustrated by the vignettes presented above, the focus on academic
development taken by individual academics was related to both their contex-
tual circumstances and the personal intentions underlying their work as
an academic. This is in line with the phenomenographic expectation that
experience and understanding is context-sensitive. From this perspective, an
individual's understanding of academic development at any one point in time
is seen as constituted on the basis of their larger experience of academic
development *and* their current perception of the context in which they find
themselves (Marton and Booth 1997). Those aspects of academic develop-
ment which are highlighted by their current context are more likely to be
focused on than those aspects which seem less relevant to their immediate
situation.

The vignettes also illustrated that career stage did not limit the *range* of
ways in which academics understand their own development. (It may have
influenced the *frequency* with which different understandings were exper-
ienced, but frequency of understandings was not a focus of this study, so
I cannot comment on this possibility.) Phenomenographically, one would
expect that amongst any substantially sized group of academics, the range
of ways of viewing their own growth and development as an academic would
reflect the range which emerged in this study. (This is not to be confused
with the frequency with which different views may be experienced at any
one point in time, which might very well vary amongst different groups
of academics.) Research on academic disciplines shows substantial intra-
disciplinary variation (e.g., Becher 1989), so again there is no reason to expect
a different *range* of ways of understanding academic development within
particular disciplines, even if the *frequency* of different understandings might
vary between disciplines.

This implies that, in providing support for academics' growth and develop-
ment, the *full* range of ways of experiencing academic development presented
in this paper needs to be taken into account. Yet, there tends to be an implicit
assumption in the existing literature that when we talk about academic devel-
opment, there is a shared understanding of what it can consist of – the main
source of variation being in the selection of developmental goals and methods
(from within that shared understanding). The terms, academic development
or professional development, are typically used without any acknowledg-
ment, or seemingly any real awareness, of the large variation in ways of
understanding what the terms may mean.

By contrast, the results presented here show substantial variation in ways
of understanding academic development, from a focus on the individual
academic to a focus on the field or society in which they are situated; from

a sense of a natural end-point to growth as an academic to a sense of an endless potential for development; from a sense of quantitative accumulations of achievement, knowledge and/or skills to a sense of qualitative shifts in perspective and understanding; from a focus on the views of others as the sole indicator of the worth or quality of academic contributions to the valuing of academics' own self-opinion; and from a desire to avoid feelings of anxiety and inadequacy to a desire to be challenged and to give altruistically to one's field or society.

In this way, the results highlight a number of issues in academic development that do not form part of the traditional literature in this area. These include whether development should be regarded as having a natural end-point, and the range of feelings underlying different ways of experiencing developing as an academic. Furthermore, the delineation presented within this paper of qualitatively different understandings amongst academics of their own development, together with the logical relationships between those understandings, provides a new clarity and integration to different aspects of traditional academic development.

For instance, the first three ways of understanding academic development presented in this paper, with their varying focus on performance efficiency, credibility and effectiveness, clarify the distinction between different types of work performance, as perceived by academics themselves. Programs aiming to improve performance in all three areas are often offered by centres for academic development, through opportunities to learn 'how to do more with less', to network strategically, to prepare CVs and teaching portfolios, to improve the quality of teaching, research grant writing, etc. So, obviously there is a widespread awareness of these as different types of academic 'needs'. However, what is missing is any sense of an integrative framework behind these different developmental needs and what they might mean to academics. This research fills that gap, providing insight into the logical relationships between these different ways of focusing on academic performance, and extending the meaning of each focus through a delineation of associated foci. These include a sense of development as primarily quantitative versus qualitative in nature, and underlying feelings of avoiding anxiety or inadequacy versus seeking satisfaction or challenge.

This clarifies, for instance, that when individuals are primarily focused on achieving a desired level of work efficiency and reducing their anxiety over current workload pressures or future job prospects, the concept of academic development can take on a very limited meaning indeed, potentially being seen solely in terms of increasing performance efficiency. Unfortunately, the current higher education climate of reduced funding, increased workload, reduced job opportunities for new academics and increased use of casual and

part-time staff can only increase the proportion of academics approaching their development from this limited perspective.

Another issue raised by these findings is the possible relationship between development as an academic *teacher* and as an academic *researcher*. As described in the introduction to this paper, the literature on academic development has so far taken a strong focus on the teaching aspect of academic work. Development as a researcher has been little investigated beyond the limits of postgraduate and postdoctoral research training (although see Brew 2002). By contrast, the holistic focus on academic development taken in this paper allowed an exploration of the integrated experience of growing and developing across different aspects of being an academic. One outcome of this, as the interview quotes presented earlier in this paper show, is that interviewees gave examples from both teaching *and* research for each of the six ways of experiencing development as an academic that emerged.

This outcome indicates that the different ways in which academics experience their own growth and development may be equally applicable to teaching *and* research. This suggests that the barrier which has been erected in the literature between development as a teacher and development as a researcher is a somewhat artificial one. Each can inform the other and there is a potential for synergy between them. In this way, I hope that this paper can help legitimate more open discussions and further research into development as a university researcher, beyond the limits of doctoral and postdoctoral research.

As foreshadowed in the introduction, these findings also provide insight into academics' experiences of their work. In particular, we see substantial variation in the perceived purpose or intention underlying what academics do, in terms of the perceived impact of their work. A key variation that emerged in the experience of developing as an academic involved expanding levels of awareness of the potential *breadth of impact* of developmental changes, varying from a focus on the *self*, in terms of academic performance and personal learning, to a focus that extends *beyond the self*, in terms of a broader impact on the discipline or society in which the academic is located.

In addition, as mentioned earlier, the first three ways of experiencing academic growth and development described in this paper provide insight into three distinct ways in which academics may focus on their *work performance* – with a varying focus on efficiency, credibility and effectiveness of performance. Similarly, the last three ways of experiencing academic growth and development provide insight into three distinct ways of focusing on *academic knowledge* – with a varying focus on breadth of knowledge, depth of knowledge and usefulness of knowledge.

The variation in *feelings* underlying academics' experience of growing and developing would also seem relevant to their larger experience of being an academic and engaging in academic work. An expanding affective focus was found across the different ways of experiencing academic development which emerged in this study, varying from a focus on negative feelings to be avoided, positive feelings to be sought after and feelings that go beyond the individual to include altruistic sharing. Given the expectation of a logical relationship between developing as an academic and being an academic, we might expect that such feelings may also form part of different ways of experiencing academia and academic work.

Clearly, this type of analysis provides a paradigmatically different perspective on the academic experience to the existing literature on academia and academic work, which has a strong sociological and structural change emphasis. The research presented here indicates that a phenomenographic approach to exploring the experience of academia and academic work has much to offer our understanding of the nature of being an academic and engaging in academic work. While there are a number of existing phenomenographic studies exploring various aspects of academic work, they do not form part of the traditional literature on academia. These studies include academics' conceptions of their subject matter (Martin and Ramsden 1998; Martin et. al. 2000, 2001), conceptions of student learning (Prosser et al. 1994; Trigwell and Prosser 1996; Åkerlind and Jenkins 1998), the scholarship of teaching (Trigwell et al. 2000), academic freedom (Åkerlind and Kayrooz 2003), research (Brew 1998, 2001) and, now, growing and developing as an academic. This is in addition to the studies of academics' conceptions of teaching described earlier in this paper. However, each of the studies examines particular aspects of academic work in isolation. It would be desirable for future research to build on these studies by exploring academics' experience of what they do more holistically.

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