The Blog:

Entering into a career in any profession can be a daunting and indeed challenging experience for anyone. However, with Higher Education (HE) in the UK going through significant changes to its working conditions and with regular scrutiny to ensure the ‘student experience’ is of the highest standard, HE in the UK has been recognised as a ‘turbulent sector’ (Hollywood *et al*, 2020). Is this an encouraging message for anyone wishing to pursue a career within the HE as an academic?

This article explores the lived experiences of four early career academics (ECAs) transitioning from school educators (within the primary and secondary sectors) to lecturers in Initial Teacher Education in a United Kingdom HE institution. These ECAs or ‘pracademics’ were established teachers with strong practitioner identities within their field of education and were very experienced in reflective practice and education systems.  The concept of agency is firstly explored, and an ecological model presented and used as a framework in this study. A collaborative autoethnographic methodological approach is used to structure personal and professional reflections in order to gain an insight into the evolving identities of the ECAs as they embrace and develop new careers within HE as lecturers.

Factors emerge which have both hindered and enhanced agency and this paper sets out some recommendations for reflection. It is hoped that HE establishments may find these findings useful to consider when inducting new staff and helping them develop and flourish in the early stages of their academic careers.