Improving Learning in a Professional Context
A research perspective on the new teacher in school

Edited by Jim McNally and Allan Blake
Improving Learning in a Professional Context provides vital new evidence on exactly how teachers learn to be teachers, evidence that is likely to affect and influence the profession for many years to come. Demonstrating that learning in schools is more than simple ‘cognitive’ knowledge of the curriculum and teaching skills, this book suggests that we need to pay more attention to the emotional, relational, ethical, material, structural and temporal dimensions of the teaching experience. Based on empirical research, including interviews with new teachers, by teachers themselves, on a scale rarely seen before, the book reveals the complexity of learning in a professional context and gives some basic truths about what really matters in teaching.

This book offers a fundamental critique of policy but also the prospect of constructive change for the better as the authors present accounts of what the ‘real’ experience of beginning teaching may be like, as well as lines for future research. Key questions are answered, such as:

• Do we really understand what beginners go through in the workplace?
• What is the experience of new teachers as they join one of the largest workforces in the developed world?
• What do teachers learn in the school, one of our universal institutions?

Becoming a teacher is a transformative search by individuals for their teaching identities and, with this book, teachers and teacher educators can at last begin to understand this complex developmental process.
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The Improving Learning series supports evidence-informed professional practice and policymaking in education. Each book showcases findings from the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) – one of the world’s largest coordinated educational research initiatives. For those with a commitment to the improvement of outcomes for learners, these books are essential reading.
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This book grew out of a four-year research project on the learning of new teachers. In 2004, the writers within assembled under the aegis of the Early Professional Learning project to undertake empirical research into the experiences of new – or more accurately, newly qualified – teachers in school. The motivation for the research arose from a concern about the fragmented experiences of beginning teachers in Scotland and England (as expressed in academic publications and official reports), though we later found that teacher induction was of wider global interest than we had first supposed. We felt that learning in a professional context – teachers in schools, in this case – required a broader and more robust research base. Did we have enough understanding of what beginners go through in the workplace? What, for example, is the experience of new teachers as they join one of the largest workforces in the developed world? What do they learn in school, one of our universal institutions? In responding to such questions, we were supported by the Economic and Social Research Council. As part of their Teaching and Learning Research Programme, we commenced a multi-method study of professional learning based first of all on the ethnographic case study of 25 new teachers in six secondary schools in Scotland, with later phases of investigation, model-building and testing taking place in primary and secondary schools in Scotland and England. Between 2004 and 2008, the project researched the experiences of 154 new teachers in 45 schools in Britain and, based on in-depth interviews with these participants, this book now reveals the complexity of learning in a professional context. It portrays the holistic nature of engagement beyond the description of a formal standard and unearths instead a transformative search by individuals for their teaching identities.
The main part of our evidence is story-based. But these stories are not simply one-off interviews with visiting researchers; they were captured by teachers as researchers, initially in their own schools, and then in other schools. The 25 new teachers with whom the project began were interviewed approximately each month; the progress of 12 of these teachers continued to be tracked over the course of two further years. Subsequent participants were interviewed on typically three occasions over the course of their first year of teaching. Our multidimensional model of beginning teaching is grounded in these stories, upon which we draw extensively throughout the book. Quotations are largely verbatim, with minimal editing only to give continuity. We also developed five purpose-specific indicators of new-teacher development. The development of one of these, the indicator of job satisfaction, is described in some detail. The others were developed along similar principles but space does not allow us to describe them as fully. Indicator statistics are used in a number of chapters where it is felt they add a layer of understanding that complements the more qualitative account. Most of the statistics refer to secondary teachers in Scotland, as these were the first group to be studied, but numerical data was also gathered from secondary teachers in England and primary teachers in Scotland.

The emotional and relational dimensions of new teachers’ learning are described and discussed in separate dedicated chapters since these were components of the experiences that featured most strongly in interviews. The material dimension is also discussed separately because it seems to matter greatly in frustrating or supporting the experience of becoming a teacher, in specific, concrete ways that are more amenable to identification and rectification. Our dimensional model is rather like separating a projectile trajectory into its x, y, z and t components, breaking down a phenomenon into constituent parts for the purpose of analysis, while recognizing that the actual journey is a more complex whole than the sum of its parts. Thus we also make the case for a holistic concept of identity formation in the process of becoming a teacher, partly from grounded theorizing, partly from the theoretical perspectives of others. The model is not intended to be neat and tidy and we hope that even a leaf through some of the chapters, with their glimpses into new teachers’ experiences, will demonstrate this. The dimensions flow into one another, overlap, compete and vary in their intensity from one individual to another, and from one
point in time to another – but with the individual new teacher at the centre of it all.

If there was an emergent and unifying theme of the research and now of the book then it is perhaps the sense of an emerging self-as-teacher identity. Becoming a teacher is an intense experience in an ontological more than an epistemological sense – they know (just) enough about teaching, but not nearly enough about themselves. Our specific focus on the beginner has revealed the understated importance in existing theorization of those dimensions of learning other than the cognitive, and the flawed presumption that occupational standards might govern the learning experiences of beginners. Though we offer some practical recommendations in Chapter 12, the book is not a ‘how to’ book for new teachers, but rather a ‘how it is’. We do not yet report on our preliminary exploration of learning in other professional contexts but already there are grounds for thinking that there may be common ground. For example, a recent doctoral thesis (Blaney 2006), supervised by one of the EPL project’s co-investigators, Professor Nick Boreham, indicated that the learning of trainee general practitioners in medicine mirrors much of our project’s findings. Broadly, the study confirmed that the probationary year challenged trainees’ assumptions about their identity and, in particular, their role as a doctor. Their learning during the year was dynamic; primarily a self-directed voyage of discovery through building relationships with patients and colleagues, which at one point in the year comes into conflict with their external assessment according to the standards for full registration as a GP.

The book is eclectic not only through its grounded theorization but in its attempts to connect with a wide literature. The experience we report is complex and, for the book to be able to make sense of this, we have resisted reductionism and the academic tendency to simplify and organize. We have not homogenized the different interpretations in the book. We all worked together on the project so there is much use of ‘we’ even though each of us, five teachers and seven academics, more or less led on at least one chapter. We took the view that all were entitled to have their individual say – and the stylistic range of the book reflects that and possibly flirts on occasion with anarchy. Does this imply a lack of consistency? Perhaps so; but is the book any the less for that? We suggest not.

Chapter 3 describes the possibly unique role that teachers played as practitioner-researchers in the research. In relation to those of
us on the project who inhabit academic life, it is probably fair to say that the teacher-researchers kept our feet on the ground while keeping us on our toes at the same time. So the book is also a research story of design evolution in which a full cast of players collaborate to find out some fundamental and worthwhile things about learning.

The research is based on stories, on the sustained narratives of new teachers, all with their own individual experience. It was therefore important to us that we did not lose sight of that. Mikhail Bakhtin’s position is that the self can only be understood in the particular and the situated. Therefore we begin with the particular situation of one new teacher. Linda’s story is drawn from the longitudinal phase of the project, and is based on 17 interviews over three years with a teacher-researcher who was also a colleague in the same school. The chapters in this book can probably be read in any order; behind them all is an array of stories. We recommend no particular order but we hope that you will read Linda’s story first.

**Reference**

Acknowledgements

The Economic and Social Research Council of the United Kingdom deserve recognition for the substantial financial support given to the project, part of their funding of the huge Teaching and Learning Research Programme. We were held accountable, of course, through a range of procedures but we have to acknowledge that we could simply not have engaged in such an extensive study, and reached whatever range and depth of understanding we did, without the support of the Council.

We owe a debt to all the teachers in all the schools. The colleagues of the new teachers who participated in the project cooperated in indicator data collection and helped us in various ways to manage the project. The new teachers who collaborated in our research, even while under enough pressure to make it as teachers themselves, are a special group; the project was about them, for them and could not have worked without them. Though they were known as individuals to only the teacher-researchers, we got to know them in discussion through their pseudonyms – so thanks to Cruella, Butterkist, Bill Shakespeare et al. – and pass on our thanks to the children you teach. If our work helps you, then it ultimately helps them as well.

All the schools we visited gave us a warm welcome and an attentive ear. We gratefully acknowledge the support of the various heads and deputies who listened, questioned and made their schools available to us. We spent an hour or so on preliminary negotiations in every school, all at different times of the day, and were unfailingly impressed by this inadvertent sampling of happy, purposeful activity. It does make you wonder about the representative nature of some news headlines. We met with Education Officers from local councils individually and together. They asked hard questions that
forced us to clarify some of our own thinking. We want to record our thanks for that and also for identifying schools and granting us access to them.

As editors, we have to thank our colleagues on the project. Through its four years we had to handle distance, pregnancies, promotion, retireals, emigration and illness. We regrouped somehow, carried on and here is the result. We know that the research team will permit us finally to single out one person. Our project administrator, Lynne Learmonth, was the hub of the project, assuming the additional roles of mentor, facilitator, confidante, poster designer and more, even pointing out new updates that we had missed. Her many stories behind the scenes may be the great unwritten chapter.

Jim McNally and Allan Blake
Abbreviations

CEPSATI  classroom environment, pupil satisfaction and achievement instrument
CPD  continuing professional development
EPL  early professional learning
EXJUDGE  expert judgement of teaching indicator
GTCS  General Teaching Council Scotland
HMI  Her Majesty’s Inspectorate
INTERACT  interactivity indicator
INTSCHED  structured interview schedule
ITE  initial teacher education
JOBSAT  job satisfaction indicator
NQT  newly qualified teacher
NT  new teacher
PDI  pupil development indicator
PGCE  Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PGDE  Postgraduate Diploma in Education
PT  principal teacher
SFR  Standard for Full Registration
SMT  senior management team
TR  teacher-researcher
Chapter 1

Linda’s story
A new teacher’s tale

Lesley Walker

Foreword

There may be no better description of a common effect of academic publishing on the subjectivities of research participants than that afforded Leopold Bloom, the main character of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. In ‘Ithaca’, a section of the novel which parodies the nature of scientific inquiry through a series of blankly worded (and yet madly pedantic) questions and answers, Bloom is dissected thus: ‘Reduce Bloom by cross multiplication of reverses of fortune, from which these supports protected him, and by elimination of all positive values to a negligible negative irrational unreal quantity’ (Joyce 1992: 855). It might come as a surprise to some readers that we begin a research text with a quotation that threatens to bite the hand that (under)writes us. For the quantitative-analysis-gone-mad that was lampooned by Joyce in 1922 is of a kind prescribed to educational research as recently as 2000. Then Secretary of State for Education and Employment, David Blunkett suggested in a speech to the Economic and Social Research Council the need ‘to be able to measure the size of the effect of A on B. This is genuine social science’ (in Hammersley 2002: 83). Reverses of fortune apart, the fact that his tenure as a cabinet minister dissipated in less time than it took Joyce to complete his masterpiece, might in some small part be explained by his perception of ‘genuine social science’ as being derivative of the methodologies employed rather than the positive values achieved. Certainly, it was as a strategy to remain relevant to the experience of our audience for at least as long as it takes to read *Ulysses*, that the Early Professional Learning project pursued both qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry. And in the chapters that follow, we attempt to demonstrate that a distinctive
result of such methods is that statistics of specific curiosity can be cross-referenced with contextualizing insights from the individual narratives in the project’s associated qualitative database. That is to say, we refute the so-called ‘worthless[ness]’ of ‘correlations based on small samples from which it is impossible to draw generalisable conclusions’ (ibid.: 84), and take instead the view of case researchers in seeking both what is commonplace and particular about a case, with the possibility of portraying something of the uncommon (Stake 2000), as opposed that is to the irrational unreal.

Our intention to portray something of the uncommon begins, then, with ‘Linda’s story: a new teacher’s tale’. Fashioned from the transcriptions of interviews with Linda that commenced during her probationary year of teaching in the social studies department of a large secondary school in Scotland, this is a story which records some of the highs and lows of the events, influences and relationships of her beginning career in a manner that we hope instates Linda’s agency in the research by making it ‘unthinkable for a bystander to say, “So what?”’ (Labov cited in Flyvbjerg 2001: 86). In the chapters ahead we revisit Linda’s evidence to undertake our own cross multiplication of data in support of a research-based model of early professional learning; for the moment however, we present a narrative of new-teacher induction, told in the words of Linda, with occasional commentary by Lesley, the teacher-researcher to whom she spoke throughout the life of the project. As distinct from the expression of positivism with which we began, we see in this confluence of practice and research the possibility of a dialogic moment of freedom in which the monologic certainty (Bakhtin 1996) of the researcher might be overtaken by scepticism ‘about erasing phenomenological detail in favour of conceptual closure’ (Flyvbjerg 2001: 85).

Linda’s story

On the way down I had two boys approach me saying they wouldn’t be in Philosophies on Thursday because of football practice and we had a bit of a conversation and that didn’t really happen on student placement because they would go to their RE teacher even though I was taking their class. That’s definitely been a huge thing.
Linda recounted this in October 2004, just into the second term of her probationary year, and its importance to her is clear. It was a ‘huge thing’. It marked, for her, an acceptance by the pupils that she was not just a teacher but also their teacher – a feeling she had never experienced on student placements. As a religious education specialist, teaching pupils one period a week, she had found it hard to get to know them individually. Learning names had been a challenge, let alone forming relationships. So a moment which outsiders to the profession, or even established teachers, might see as normal or routine took on an added significance because it literally made her feel part of the school community. It marked a significant change in how she was perceived by the pupils. She belonged at the school. She had a professional identity as a teacher in the school.

In August 2004 three probationers joined the staff of Forth Academy, a large Scottish comprehensive school with over a thousand pupils. Linda in social studies, Ann in science and biology and Rachael in English had never met before, but, throughout the year, their relationship and friendship grew. Although the school’s mentoring programme was in place and appreciated by this group, what emerged from their interview data was the importance of the probationers to each other. They formed a team giving informal support to each other and to other probationers who had joined the staff. Ann and Rachael worked in large departments, which gave them an immediate network of colleagues in the school. Linda’s experience in a two-teacher department, before the introduction of the faculty system, was different. Her story is now told in the first person, using her own words as recorded in the transcriptions of the 17 interviews she gave during her first three years. Commentaries on Ann and Rachael are included to illustrate similarities or differences in experiences.

**School life**

I joined the staff at Forth Academy in August 2004 to start my probationary year. Over the summer I had been thinking a lot about my classes. ‘What if they are really bad?’ and ‘What if I can’t control them?’ summed up my feelings. Although I came into the school a few times over the summer, I would have welcomed an induction week or something at the change of timetable in June, so I could go in and check classes and find...
my way round the school, because that’s one of the daunting things. I would like to have been able to ask someone questions when I came in over the summer. It would have been nice to arrive in August and know things.

Rachael felt the same. She met her principal teacher (PT) in June, but, on reflection, would have liked to have shadowed a class for the day so she could get her bearings in the school. Ann admitted she had half expected starting at Forth to be like a student placement but the realization that the classes she taught were hers struck her immediately and after the first day, which was like being ‘on a roller coaster’, she did not feel like returning. She did, however, and at the end of the year, her head teacher described her as ‘a teacher for the 21st century’. Linda explained the importance of having a room of one’s own in establishing her place in the school.

Having my own classroom was a major advantage for me. I think having my own room makes a huge difference and I particularly appreciated this when other probationers in the school did not have this. I felt I could move and arrange the desks, put things in the walls and establish myself in this way without having to ask anyone’s permission.

Ann also had her own room, which she realized she had taken for granted. All her resources were at hand and she knew where the books and jotters were. She had also put her name on the door and felt this was a way to establish her identity as a teacher in the school as a whole. She felt many pupils, including those she did not teach, knew who she was because they saw her name on display. Rachael had to move between classrooms, however, and because of the extra time thus required to organize materials for lessons, she did not go to the staffroom.

At the change of timetable in June 2007 all of Rachael’s classes were scheduled in one room. And although other staff did use the room, Rachael felt she could now establish herself in her workplace. Within weeks the room changed physically; but more noticeable was the change in Rachael herself. She was happier, more relaxed and felt more established in the school. This change also affected her teaching. She admits she is now more adventurous in her lesson content because if something does not work she has all her other resources to hand and can make a quick change.
But as well as having a classroom of one’s own, the staffroom too can influence new teachers’ development. Linda explains:

I was concerned about how easy it would be for me to meet other staff, as there were only two people in my department. Fortunately, I soon started going out for lunch with Ann and other teachers in her department. This was useful because it was almost a sounding-off time where you don’t spend the whole time talking about kids and lessons, but it comes up and you realize other people have problems, too. Although I found meetings like this were reassuring I did worry about going to the staffroom. If you’re not used to going you don’t have a group to go and sit with everyday and that does make it a little bit more difficult. Even by November I still felt unsure about going to the staffroom. In fact I was spending most intervals and part of my lunchtime in my room talking to my PT.

I didn’t feel isolated from the rest of the staff though, because one day when I was going into the staffroom everyone was leaving for registration, so I was saying ‘Hello, Hello, Hello’ as they passed. So I felt as if I did know people. I was meeting people in all sorts of places: at the photocopier, going out for lunch and by chance in the corridors. I certainly felt the need to do this as it made me feel more confident. I was building up relationships with other teachers on a more personal level, so I felt more comfortable about going into classrooms to speak to teachers. In fact, by November I felt I knew a lot of people by face and I could stand and have a conversation with them – but ask me their name and I wouldn’t be able to tell you.

Something that helped me considerably was the fact that there were two other probationers in the school and we got on well together. I liked knowing that others were in the same boat as me. For example, if they were busy filling some form in for probationers and I wasn’t, then it reminded me that I should do that too.

Because Ann and Rachael travelled to work together, their friendship and support for each other grew during the year. As Rachael put it, ‘Ann is my lifeline’; but, as Linda said, ‘I know Rachael and Ann travel together … but I don’t feel I know them so well’. Linda would have liked a specific time allocated in the week when the probationers met to ‘just talk’. Neither Ann nor Rachael voiced this need, but then
their car journeys provided them with exactly this opportunity. This informal support is something that can easily be underestimated. Rachael’s interviews in November 2004 revealed the practical help she and Ann gave each other during the drive to and from school. They bounced ideas off each other, let off steam at the end of the day, discussed classes they both taught and gained reassurance from doing this; they cheered each other up and provided the emotional support which planned mentoring cannot always address.

The following year another probationer joined this car pool. She found the experience of starting teaching ‘intimidating’ and, though she acknowledged that the school support was good, she found that travelling with two teachers who had just been through the probationary year was ‘brilliant’. She knew right away that she was travelling with ‘exactly the right people to talk to’, because she could ask the ‘silly’ questions in the car. Again the importance of informal support is highlighted.

As well as settling in to school life, I was learning a lot about behaviour management. The classes were quite difficult when I started and it was a struggle. My PT told me that some of the classes hadn’t had a qualified RE teacher for some time. I’d been getting quite confrontational with some classes and I realized it wasn’t working. Then we got a talk at the local authority probationer meeting about not being so confrontational and showing the pupils that they had a responsibility. I noticed it made a difference in quite a few classes because they were waiting for me to blow up and get really mad at them, whereas now I ask them to just go and stand outside and I have a few quiet words with them. It’s amazing how different they are and I think ‘Wow!’

Ann and Rachael also valued the local authority support on behaviour management which took place early in the school year, in which different scenarios were demonstrated. They tried some of the suggestions, and found ‘they worked’. During an interview in September 2006, a probationer in the primary sector of the same authority noted that the CPD on behaviour management had been ‘the most useful lecture that I have had on behaviour management through the whole postgrad training’. These types of breakthrough moments in which a probationer feels that something has worked well, or in which progress can suddenly be seen, have a strong
impact on their feeling of achieving success. These probationers also appear to be acknowledging the importance of experiencing the right CPD at the right time in the probationary year.

I was constantly trying to find ways to interest reluctant pupils. I soon realized that my degree in Christianity and indigenous religions was not going to be used and I was continually working to find different ways to teach the subject. I also kept in touch with people on my PGCE course and regularly swapped ideas and information with them. I was reluctant to share my Forth Academy email address with them though because I didn't want to start using it for a year and then find I had to change it all. I did find that some of the resources in the department were old and dated, and even I was bored watching one of the documentary videos. So I suggested, and used, some more up-to-date films and the pupils were definitely more responsive. I also used an episode of *The Simpsons* to illustrate religious authority and I used the Critical Skills approach with several classes.

All this led to long hours of preparation to the point where I felt my work–life balance had tipped the wrong way. Even in March I felt as if I was working flat out just as I had done on a student placement. I was starting to get grumpy and not just with the pupils but with my own family and friends as well. I think it was because I wasn’t having the chance to say ‘I’m going to the cinema tonight and I’m not thinking about school’. I was also finding it difficult to get out of teacher mode, to the point where both my Mum and my boyfriend were commenting on the tone of voice I used when speaking to them!

Observations about outdated and old materials occurred in several interviews during the course of the project. In each case the probationer was more than willing to develop new resources or approaches and offer them to the department. When a class was working on a project in biology, Ann asked them to produce a PowerPoint presentation as the end product rather than a poster or report. This was a highlight for her because not only was the class more motivated, but the idea was incorporated into the courses for all classes. Ann felt ‘really chuffed’ because her PT thought it was a good idea: another breakthrough moment.
**Professional observations**

Linda clarified for herself what professionalism meant, and in a way that was unplanned yet effective.

Someone else who influenced me in a different way was the teacher I had taken over from. Although I never met her I found out directly from the pupils some of the personal anecdotes and experiences she had apparently told the classes. She was speaking about things I wouldn’t speak to my friends about and the pupils were hoping I would talk about any similar experiences of my own. This helped me to clarify in my head exactly what professionalism is, and I formed a code in my mind about what and what not to talk to classes about, and where to draw the dividing line in conversations.

Formal CPD discussions can be planned to cover this aspect of the Standard for Full Registration, yet here Linda learned from someone who, in her mind, had pushed the boundaries of professionalism too far. What Linda learned very effectively, from someone she had never met, were the consequences of inappropriate professional behaviour.

Other probationers also talked of hearing stories, from the past or sometimes from other schools, concerning a teacher, an incident or a pupil, and acknowledged that they too had learned something (either positive or negative) that helped them to develop as a teacher. Although the Scottish Induction Scheme includes formal and direct aspects of professional development (such as mentoring), probationers are also learning to become teachers from the school as a whole. Sometimes this takes the form of stories about teachers who have long since left the school, but whose histories are recounted and passed on. These echoes of the past are not just nostalgic remembrances, for they can be influential in the present.

A more positive influence was my mentoring time, which I appreciated because it was a place when useful conversations took place because I was on my own and people weren’t interrupting all the time, and I could sit down for a period and just talk.

Linda’s need to talk is interesting and something that the other probationers did not mention to the same extent. Does this simply reveal
the different needs of individuals or emphasize the requirements of someone working in a small department where fewer informal interactions occur in a day? In some schools two probationers have been allocated to the same department and this can generally be beneficial and supportive, especially at the start of the probationary year. For Linda, however, the desire to express something of herself informed her attitude towards teaching observations, as well as her completion of the Standard for Full Registration.

I think being observed is useful because you are getting more feedback on yourself and you are more aware of what you are doing right or wrong. I was getting ideas on what to try and it built my confidence because I was being told things I was doing well and I could incorporate new ideas into my lessons. I also liked observing some of the pupils I taught in other lessons even if it just showed me some pupils were the same in other classes.

My observations took place every three weeks and I received written and oral feedback. These were recorded in my interim and final profiles, which I updated during the terms and completed by December and May respectively. I did not find the form difficult or time-consuming to complete, but I half expected to get a box for my own personal statement, my own evaluation of how I was doing. I expected to have to include whether I thought I was meeting the requirements, whereas there isn’t anything like that. It’s a case of filling in the dates and that’s it and I don’t think I got anything out of filling in the form. I didn’t really think of the Standard for Full Registration on an everyday basis very much. I know the mentor used it when she was planning meetings but I didn’t need to look at it to complete my profiles. I sometimes felt as if I had to cover certain topics, for example, child protection, so that I could get that date in the box rather than the fact that I really needed to do child protection. This is one of the main changes I would make to the probationary year, because I didn’t feel I got anything out of completing the profiles. I wouldn’t want to add to the workload but I would have found it more satisfying to include something which showed my progress, perhaps in the form of a personal statement.

What mattered to Ann were the comments on her observed lessons
and the targets set for the second part of the year. Rachael also found the Standard for Full Registration ‘heavy going’, and she ended up ‘tuning out if it’. She would have liked to tell the story of how she progressed because for her it didn’t really reflect ‘Rachael the teacher’. Both probationers knew that other staff were consulting the Standard but it was not a priority for them.

**Moving on up**

After Christmas I began to think more about the future and getting a job. I was lucky because there was a job coming up at Brady High and maybe one at Forth Academy, but people didn’t really know when they could apply. I just think there are too many different stories and too many different ways of doing things for probationers in different local authorities. I think if they’re going to put jobs out late in the year for after the summer, then to me, all local authorities should be trying to put them out at the same time.

Linda left Forth after her probationary year and took up a full-time permanent post at Brady High, the school she attended as a pupil. Her story continues:

I was pleased to move school because it was a completely fresh start and I thought staff wouldn’t think of me as someone who had just been a probationer. When the new staff were introduced there was a bit of a muddle so I think some staff missed my name and I soon realized that some staff were thinking of me as the pupil they had known. Some even still thought I was a probationer. Although I was fully qualified it was like finding my feet again, but I was re-learning in some ways and learning from my own mistakes from last year. I had to establish myself with classes and I kept thinking back to last year and asking myself what I could do to make things smoother.

What has really helped me was that the course in the department was more prescribed. I may work in school to 6pm but I’m going home without my big box. I also feel more confident. I’ve lost that new feeling and it’s as if I’ve moved one rung up the ladder. I have had really good support from my PT and curricular head. In fact, only the other week they asked me if they were giving me enough support. Even though this is year
two I still feel as though I need help, especially with behaviour management. Some of the girls in my Standard Grade class have a difficult attitude and I don’t know if it’s because they feel threatened by me because I’m a young teacher. A principal teacher on one of my student placements said that could happen.

By April 2007 Linda’s PT had been promoted and, because she was the only RE specialist, she had full responsibility for all the certificate classes in the school.

I’ve also been given a fair amount of responsibility because my PT has been out of school for some work he is doing on Raising Achievement and I have to make sure things run smoothly in his classroom. I think he was aware that one day I am going to get the PT’s job and he has to make sure that I am ready and capable of being left with the department, so he started throwing more responsibilities to me, to the point that just before he left I was doing the ordering – I was having to manage the budget.

Part of that responsibility is also apparent in Linda’s involvement in such extra-curricular activities as the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Linda’s tone of voice revealed the pleasure and surprise she felt at taking part in the expedition. It was a positive experience which gave her the opportunity to realise that she could achieve and do new things too.

I would say my relationships with other staff are better than at Forth, probably because I know I’m permanent. I feel as if I’m consulted more and I use the staffroom here more than ever I did at Forth. There is another young teacher in the same curricular group as me and I feel comfortable going in and sitting with her. Towards the end of the year I began to feel really settled – not like the same time last year, when I knew I was only there for a year. It was nice to know I had job security and I didn’t have to battle with applications and interviews. I’ve actually just last week come back from a Duke of Edinburgh hike and it was good seeing the kids out of school as well. They saw a different side to me, especially coming out of a tent first thing in the morning.
It has given me a lot more opportunities; it is making me think, ‘Where am I going to go from here?’ A guidance course came up, so I am interested in maybe doing that. All this extra responsibility is giving me the opportunity to become a PT of RE; if I wanted, I could probably use all this experience and do the guidance course. And if I decide not to go down that route, I can go down the chartered teacher route. So my options are still all open. It is a good thing even though it is more difficult just now. I wouldn’t say stressful, I suppose stressful is the wrong word because I would say that I am just busier.

References

References

1 Chapter 1 Linda’s story: A new teacher’s tale


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Note

1 The indicators are available for download at the project website:
http://www.strath.ac.uk/curricularstudies/eplproject/
3 Chapter 3 A new concept of teacher-researcher?


4 Chapter 4 Feeling professional: New teachers and induction


5 Chapter 5 Who can you count on?: The relational dimension of new-teacher learning


Note

1 A correlation matrix determined the presence of a majority of coefficients of value 0.3 and above, p<0.05, which indeed suggested the presence of one or more investigative components. In addition, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was 0.96, exceeding the recommended value of 0.6, and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity was statistically significant, again supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix (Pallant 2007).
Chapter 6 Making room for new teachers: The material dimension in beginning teaching


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Chapter 8 Job satisfaction among newly qualified teachers in Scotland


9 Chapter 9 Fun in theory and practice: New teachers, pupil opinion and classroom environments


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Possibilities: Struggling for Hope and Transformation in
Chapter 10 Design of the times: Measuring interactivity, expert judgement and pupil development in the Early Professional Learning project


Notes

1 The data discussed in this chapter is for Scottish secondary schools with typically over 50 staff; schools with only a few staff (and most primary schools) have fewer relational options.

2 While participants selected only one person category per schedule, no such restrictions applied to the interaction categories. For example, the reasons why conversations were important (N = 275) exceed the number of conversations actually recorded (N = 236). That is to say, following an interaction, a new teacher could both have learned something and felt better.

3 Percentages are expressed in relation to the numbers of conversations with another teacher (N = 60) and mentors or supporters (N = 45), respectively.
11 Chapter 11 An age at least to every part: A longitudinal perspective on the early professional learning of teachers


Chapter 13 The invention of teachers: How beginning teachers learn


Notes

1 We say ‘almost’ advisedly. There were new teachers who said, in effect, what’s the fuss, it’s a job. Or who described themselves as ‘just plodding along fine’. There were others who had seemingly effortless introductions to teaching, feeling settled by mid-September of the first year: ‘Now it feels as if I am the boss and I have got the handle on the class.’ Nevertheless, most of our sample would recognize much of the above picture.

2 This was a ‘hot’ interview in the sense that it took place during the placement. It was an emotional event for the interviewee in that she found it ‘therapeutic’ and even ‘inspirational’ to unload her feelings at coping or trying to cope with difficult classes in a ‘challenging’ school in Manchester. This took place during a 90-minute unstructured interview. She later said of that interview, ‘nobody ever really asks you that [referring to her
confrontation with the ‘kid’) and you’d never really say to someone, “Well, I think it’s something personal, it’s something that really upsets me”, because you don’t want to look an idiot’. At a subsequent ‘cold’ interview, some months later, she summed up the difference between the two interviews: the first had been ‘therapeutic’ but the second was ‘insightful now, because I’m not in a stressful situation’. It should be added by way of relevant context that Catherine was rated a very good student teacher by her tutor, and by teachers at the school. She was subsequently approached by the school to see if she wanted to work there.