

*Early  
Professional  
Learning  
Project*



*An ESRC (TLRP) funded project with University of  
Stirling & Manchester Metropolitan University*

**Finding an identity or meeting a standard? Conflicting discourses in becoming a teacher.**

Paper presented at Annual European Educational Research Conference 2006, Geneva

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**Abstract**

In this paper, we first examine the apparent contradictions between the actual experience of becoming a schoolteacher and the formal structures and systems of teacher induction. Our main source of evidence is the set of ethnographic interviews conducted every few weeks with 28 teachers during their first year of teaching in schools in central Scotland (though we shall also refer to quantitative data in indicators developed as part of our research\*). From these we give a brief outline of issues within their national context e.g. no explicit standards-related discourse, relevance of meetings, problems of the national placement scheme. We then focus on the prominence of the emotional-relational dimension of the early teaching experience and consider whether their narrative basis indicates the need for an ontological understanding of this 'professional' transition that cannot be readily expressed in the language of occupational standards. In exploring this, we consider workplace learning in a wider context (Hodkinson et al) as well as theories of learning (Illeris) and identity (Giddens, Bakhtin) – in particular whether we can make the case for the place of self.

\* The research is four year project on 'Early Professional Learning' that is part of the ESRC funded Teaching and Learning Research Programme

## Background

The framework for new teachers in Scotland is formally expressed through the Standard for Full Registration (SFR) as a teacher and the Teacher Induction Scheme, both of which are fully described in the website of the General Teaching Council for Scotland (see <http://www.gtcs.org.uk>). The SFR provides generalised statements of knowledge, skills and values that are needed to become teacher. The induction scheme offers to new teachers (traditionally known as probationers in Scotland) a guaranteed one year training post; a maximum class commitment of 0.7 full time equivalent; dedicated time set aside for professional development; access to an experienced teacher as a nominated probationer supporter; a consistently high quality probation experience; a good salary which compares well with other professions. Aspects of professional development include meetings with a designated supporter and observation of teaching.

Our evidence, however, is that new teachers make very little reference to the formal standard or support scheme. The evidence is based on ethnographic interviews of 28 new teachers by insiders (teachers as researchers) and survey questionnaires to new teachers (1200+) and a sample of pupils taught (1200+). A major conceptual theme in our interview data is that of relationality. This tended to reinforce conclusions from earlier research, that informal relational support in the form of 'natural mentoring' was crucially important (McNally 1994), and that the experience of new teachers was governed by 'relational conditions' (McNally et al, 1997) involving colleagues and pupils. This has been further supported by Eraut (2004) who found that 'informal support from people on the spot' when help is needed tends to be more important than that from formally designated helpers or mentors.

Within the context of these developing relationships with colleagues, it appears that the new teachers are able to build up trust and find the opportunities they need for expression of their emotional engagement with their lived experience of teaching. An important part of this experience, for example, is their anxiety about pupil behaviour and class control. This also subsides as they gain a fuller understanding of pupils as individuals (further discussed in McNally et al 2006). Relating to new pupils is perhaps the main experience through which novices (and experienced practitioners) tend to make sense of a new teaching context. It can direct adjustments in how you teach, for example in use of methods and resources but also in that how you relate to children is, in a fundamental way, integral to your being accepted as their teacher.

## Some contradictions and issues

The need to have some formal structure and support in place for new teachers is understandable. Responsible policy could not simply place new teachers in schools and let them get on with it –and it is to the credit of government that substantial resources have been allocated for this purpose. The difficulty arises when formality is over-emphasised, when unthinking over-dependence sets in. Where there is no informal support in a school, the need for some formal input becomes highly important. However, where there is a natural mentoring environment in a school, then it would be somewhat irresponsible and managerial if that were to be supplanted by a costly structure that undermines such a priceless ethos of personal and professional support.

Another danger is that a support system may be put in place for which there is no underlying theoretical or practical evidence. For example, the induction scheme recommends that for observation of teaching, the supporter and probationer teacher should agree beforehand on the element of the SFR being observed. However, our evidence is that new teachers do not use the SFR in talking about their teaching. We would suggest that this is because the SFR is too general in its expression (inevitably so) and cannot capture the essence of classroom teaching for beginners. The SFR has a different purpose. It is a statement of public accountability, not a useful reference for making sense of everyday teaching.

The new teachers in our sample all achieved the SFR. It is not that they were incompetent teachers – quite the opposite in most cases. However, the SFR was not mentioned in interviews until their official interim report (based on the SFR) was due, some four months into the first year of teaching. It tended to be used as a checklist to fulfil a bureaucratic requirement. Transcripts were scrutinised for implicit connections to statements of competence contained in the SFR. One was the developing of a sense of difference (between classes, lessons and individual children):

I've learnt that no two lessons are the same, that no two classes are the same and not to expect them to be the same and, though you're preparing the same work, it never works out the same ... at first I was a bit concerned and I thought well maybe I wasn't teaching it correctly, especially the first time I taught the lesson and there was an element of thinking that you can change this or change that, but you need to know that kids are different and different things work for different kids.

Allowing for the difference in register, it could be argued that this quote has some resemblance to this extract from the SFR (GTCS 2001):

registered teachers ... ensure learning tasks are varied in form, differentiated and devised to build confidence ... select strategies for teaching and learning appropriate to the subject, topic and interests and needs of pupils .... use and adapt materials for learning and teaching which stimulate ...

There is clearly a disparity between the ordered expression of the standard and the actual experience of learning that is taking place. The language of informal learning by new teachers is surely more authentic in representing the process. A standards-centred or competence-based discourse may have a place in the rhetoric of product rather than process. To that extent, the discourse of new teachers and the grounded concepts of this paper may be seen as complementary to the meta-language of policy.

We would agree with Halliday (2004) that we need rich descriptions of becoming competent and the contexts in which it happens – partly our intention in this paper. We have as yet little theoretical sense yet of how the specific competence statements of the SFR are or could be meaningfully used by practitioners. It may of course be possible to discover whether some competences like differentiation above, for example, are more important or more stage-critical than others.

Another emergent issue in interviews is the concern by some of the new teachers coming to the end of their induction year about securing employment as a teacher. Our sample was used for in depth interviews and is not large enough to be representative, but recent entries in the probationers' discussion board run by the Times Educational Supplement (TES website 2006) indicate that this has become a serious issue. Many people who entered courses of Initial Teacher Education on the basis of obtaining teaching posts in a climate of a national shortage are unable to obtain posts and feel that they have been misled. Selected comments from 24 messages posted on the topic are appended to the paper.

In comparison to such situations, debates on the conflicting discourses of relationality and standards are indeed academic. Furthermore, the obligation undertaken to place all graduating teachers in a school for one year has systemically undermined the system of placements for student teachers within ITE Programmes, as it has taken up places in schools to which they would normally be allocated. Without pursuing too far the question of whether the induction scheme has been an expensive over-correction to practice, there is a suggestion here of further evidence of the stark contrast between policy rhetoric and practice and the actual lived experiences of new teachers.

### **Developing a theory of learning to teach**

The argument in this paper is of course presented in the specific context of new teachers. Their learning experience has been found to be mainly relational rather than cognitive. While the social dimension of learning is acknowledged by many writers, we prefer relational to social as there are identifiable social connections that develop in our data e.g. with colleagues and pupils, but also because these connections are 'professionally' important for development. They are more than merely social.

The experience is also characterised by its emotional involvement. Teaching itself causes anxiety and apprehension, satisfaction and delight. Emotional language is frequent in the interviews e.g. 'butterflies', 'nerves, panic', 'waking at two or three', even in anticipation of their first day. Yet the inevitable anxiety over 'class control' tends to be bound up in a developing knowledge of children as individuals and collectively as a class. This development itself is often expressed in affective terms, for example 'pleased', 'liked' and 'happier'. The first days and weeks of teaching, therefore, tend to be emotionally charged for many new teachers with so much compressed into a short period. It appears that there is little option but to enter life as a teacher through emotional labour. But this labour is also an investment in the formation of relationships that become the heart of teaching. Other studies suggest that emotions are important throughout the lives of teachers. Hargreaves (1998) sees the emotions of teaching as 'not just a sentimental adornment... (but)...fundamental in and of themselves'. In his extensive study of informal learning in the workplace, Eraut (2004) argues that the 'emotional dimension of professional work is much more significant than normally recognised'.

In his more general theory of learning, Illeris (2002) identifies the cognitive, the emotional and the social as the three dimensions of learning. Our data has few examples of development that are strictly cognitive. For example little mention is made of subject knowledge, lesson planning, practical teaching insights. New teachers are of course meeting the professional standard so we might infer that knowledge, skills and values are somehow being acquired, that implicit learning and tacit knowledge develops (e.g. Eraut 2000). It may be that there is a latent cognitive dimension of learning to teach that emerges in a later post-traumatic phase of development. In this early phase, however, it is the emotional and

relational dimensions of learning that come to the fore. Such a learning experience is consistent with Illeris' theory:

Very special and demanding situations, often with a crisis-like character, can lead to deep and comprehensive transformative learning processes that include simultaneous change in all the three learning dimensions and have to do with the very identity of the learner (p.229)

It may indeed be that new teachers discover their own 'personal commitment' during this emotional-relational experience. They find their own sense of purpose in teaching. The transition into teacherhood is also a personal transformation, an experience of becoming rather than one of incremental learning. It is about who you are as much as what you know and is perhaps better understood as an ontological rather than epistemological process. Beginning teaching is a deep process of personal change in which there is an emergence of a self-as-teacher identity.

### **Identity in context**

'Identity' itself is of course a much contested concept, but perhaps the first step in conceptual clarification ought to be the actual research data – the continuing interview-based narratives over the course of the first year of teaching. New teachers do face the fundamental question of whether they can see themselves as teachers in what is reflected from colleagues and children in their various interactions. In this respect, the concept of a 'relational self', used by Hoveid and Hoveid is apt in portraying the image of an individual's adaptation to and acceptance within a new relational context.

Yet becoming a teacher is not simply a derivatively social experience; the sense of a 'self' is socially situated rather than socially constructed. Each individual's evolving narrative can be read as the voice of a personal struggle through a more or less reflexive engagement with the experience itself. Even in a context of prevailing professional standards, there is strong evidence that new teachers seek (or simply just find) a sense of their 'new' professional selves, that is given partly by colleagues and partly by pupils, but also experienced within as personal change (with little reference to the relevant standard, namely the SFR).

Although relationality is a major theme, this should not occlude the personal and individual nature of the narratives, the unfolding situations and sense-making by the beginners themselves that are about themselves. Our concept of identity has also, therefore, to accommodate some notion of developing individuals. It has to include some sense of the unique persons who, in their developing biographies, are becoming teachers. The unfolding narratives as biographical episodes do not convey personal change as some sudden alteration in behaviour or self-concept. Each one is rather more like a story of self-discovery, a growing reflexive awareness that a self-as-teacher is becoming possible. For some it may be about the emergence of qualities within oneself (e.g. humility); for others it is not quite possible to articulate the change, though change itself is acknowledged. Giddens (1991) uses the term 'self-identity' to mean 'the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography' (p.53). Although it is but one of many potential stories that could be told about one's self, and is thus 'fragile', it is also 'robust' in that it can be secure enough to allow the person to cope with a transition and inherent tensions in a given context. Thus in eventually reaching a self that has within it a teacher identity, typically after several weeks of emotional turmoil and vulnerability, an individual has, for a time, a new or revised sense of 'ontological security'.

In relation to teacher development, Tabachnik and Zeichner (1983) have made the point that what students themselves bring as individuals to the experience and what part this plays in their own development, should not be underestimated. More recently, Reid (2001), in his keynote speech to UCET expressed the concern that the development of theory and policy should not overlook the intrinsic personal qualities and diversity of talent that new teachers bring to their work. Becoming a teacher, we argue, is thus an extension of these various individual biographies, both through drawing on the existing capacity, talent or qualities of different individuals for teaching, and also through a degree of change in the unique identities they previously had. Though our case applies to beginning teachers in schools, individual biography has been found to be significant in workplace learning more generally (Hodkinson et al 2004), and in a similar way, in 'bringing prior abilities and experiences to the workplace ... (and in that) ... participation in work contributes to the construction and development of worker identity'.

Learning as an inherently emotional process embedded within a relational context is an accepted concept of the development of self and identity (Bosma and Kunnen 2001, p.xiii). Assuming or adopting (or adapting to) a new identity in the sense of 'becoming a teacher' has long been recognised by many educational ethnographers as a more realistic representation of the beginner's actual experience than a more rational, cognitive notion of learning to teach (e.g. Eddy 1969).

It is not only because of the emotional and relational themes identified in data classification, but from the individual narratives themselves, that there is a clear case for equating learning to teach with forming an identity as a teacher. In the current, extensive longitudinal study of teachers by Chris Day et al (2005),

it is clear that identity may be the fundamental construct for understanding teacher effectiveness and improvement. Since individuals take time to acquire a 'teacher' identity, a plausible inference is that the early months and years of teaching may be fairly crucial in identity formation.

### **The individual self**

Given the personal stories in the data, our construct of identity has to accommodate a sense of self and personhood. You have to 'give of yourself but not be yourself', as one new teacher put it. Much of the emotionality in the narrative accounts, particularly in relating to children, suggest the embedding of a personal commitment (included in the SFR) within individuals whose identity may be associated, as Greenwood (1994) would argue, with their engagement in a moral career. The raw data for this paper is a set of individual stories, each with an emerging self-as-teacher identity, closer perhaps to Giddens' (1991) notion of self-identity. Hoveid and Hoveid's (2004) 'relational self' also conveys something of agency and purpose in a self that is intrinsically dependent on pupils and colleagues (and significant others) for its emergence and expression. In this brief quote, a new teacher has become aware of her new 'self-as-teacher' in disturbing otherwise close relationships outside school:

Personally I find it difficult to get out of teacher mode. I've gone home and I've got into trouble from my mum because I used the tone and words I would use to pupils like 'Stop speaking to me like that' and she just looked at me and said you're not a teacher now you know, and I said 'what?' because I didn't realise I was doing it, and my boyfriend's always on at me, saying stop treating me like one of your pupils ... That's one thing I'm definitely struggling with, speaking to people out of the classroom like pupils!

The concept of identity formation here is less complex perhaps than in many other analyses (e.g. Sikes, Measor and Woods, 1985; Stronach et al 2002). The explanation of this difference may lie in the focus on that brief, beginning period when the development task, so to speak, is well defined – to become accepted as a teacher by your pupils and colleagues.

In many of the contributions to the recent CTRIP seminar series, one is struck by the primacy of the individual's story (e.g. Burn on the male early years teacher; Daly and Maguire on becoming a black manager; van Zanten, indirectly, on young teachers' new humanitarian ethic in French schools). It is difficult to resist, and perhaps wrong to deny, the integrity of each person's story in our attempts to theorise. People do bring their individual abilities and unique experiences to the new workplace and working there contributes to their developing worker identity'. Alheit and Dausien (1999) actually write of 'biographicity' to mean the capacity that people have that could not be taught by experts, their uniqueness as a resource for building new relationships. It is surely important, therefore, that we recognise limits to individual development that courses of professional 'development' can actually bring about. It is often people's individual experiences, qualities and capacities that enable them to perform (or, indeed, prevent them from performing) – in the classroom or elsewhere.

We alluded in previous work (McNally *et al* 1997) to a sense of a 'personal struggle' by beginners and the 'more or less existentialist predicament' in which they found themselves. Within the prominent theme of 'others' in the experience, we proposed that some concept of 'self' ought to be somehow accommodated in any attempt at a full explanation. It is not as an abstract concept that we argue for recognition of self but on the basis of the particular stories and situations that are revealed through interview with individuals. Bakhtin's view was that self can never be a self-sufficient construct (Holquist, p.19), but throughout his work, he placed radical emphasis on particularity and situatedness. Abstract questions about selfhood could only be pursued as specific questions about location.

### **Personal purpose in teaching**

A further observation to be made on the substance of the narratives is that their content – self in relation to pupils and colleagues – reveals what matters to the interviewees. Colleagues clearly play a major part but this is a common feature of many workplaces, and is no less important because of that. Indeed Hinchcliffe (2004) claims that there is an ethical nexus inscribed in relations with others in the workplace and that this is inescapable and bound up with technical skills. His argument is that the ethical dimension of relationships at work is important for human flourishing and for the quality of work that is done, provided they are not treated in formal performative terms. The research data for beginning teachers supports this position: the relational nature of their development is not only a means or context for learning (to teach) but is an integral part of what it means to become, and probably to continue to be, a teacher. The interactions and developing relationships with children in classes is, however, probably what essentially distinguishes teaching from other occupations. The near pre-occupation of new teachers in interviews with their developing relationships with these classes and the individual 'pupils' within them suggests that this is what gives individually felt meanings to their early teaching experience. Thus it is not only a question of being 'identified' by children as 'their' teacher – and thus becoming a teacher in

real, relational rather than official, standardised terms - but of this being what in fact matters most to the individual new teachers, the experience through which they feel their own initial sense of purpose.

This interpretation of this specific phenomenon evokes the broader existentialist view that what tends to stand out in our experience is what *matters* to us. Citing Heidegger and Kierkegaard, Guignon (2000), for example, states that 'discernment and differentiation are possible only for a being that *cares* about what it encounters' (p.83). The centrality in the narratives of the developing relationship with classes suggests that this is what matters to new teachers. Furthermore, the interpersonal and emotional nature of its expression suggests that the growth of new teachers into their new 'professional' role involves a degree of personal commitment by them as individuals. In the standards for beginners (SFR and SITE), it should be recognised that 'personal commitment and professional values' do constitute one of the three categories of performance (along with knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities). However, the richness of the narrative data base leads us to at least a conceptual elaboration of what this might mean experientially. The personal commitment is clearly themed in the series of interviews as a developing emotional engagement by individual new teachers; it is a commitment that both influences and depends on the very self-identity of these beginners.

Nor do values appear to be associated with any formally espoused rhetoric about what matters. Values too are bound up in the emotional-relational journey of discovery of self and others. We would argue that individual new teachers are engaged in internalising their own sense of purpose in a worthwhile cause through their own early experiences as extensions of their own personal histories. This is not to say that ITE and induction programmes are not relevant, but that they have to be seen as only part of a range of potential influences that are only likely to achieve impact if they connect to a central core of development that is the personal sense of purpose in teaching within each individual biography.

The conceptual clusters – emotionality, relationality and self-identity - are presented as major themes in the data but it is evident that they are closely interwoven and indeed integral to the learning process that is defined by the experience of becoming a teacher. They are a conceptual triad (rather than the SFR triangle of knowledge, skills and values) within which the beginner experiences meaning and purpose. The 'ethical nexus inscribed in relations with others', as Hinchcliffe (2004) put it, is important in itself as a performance end as much as means. Smith (2003) further argues that there is purpose in informal learning through the concern to build the sorts of communities in which people can be happy and fulfilled.

New teachers face the fundamental question of whether they can see themselves as teachers, not only in the reflections from colleagues and children in their schools, but also in the mirror they hold up to themselves. What they articulate in interviews are often different personal qualities rather than any values prescribed by a professional standard, personal attributes they discover or need to find within themselves that will enable them to accommodate the demands of the job. This search for a teaching identity has a strong individual dimension. For example, one beginner talks of recognising the emergence of 'humanity' and 'humility' within herself, as she begins to understand the real difficulties that some children experience in their lives. It is as if the ability to teach comes in part from an emotional response to a developing relationship with children. Through this emotional-relational experience, they discover or make their personal commitment, their internal, implicit values and sense of purpose. The CTRIP seminar paper by van Zanten (2005) gave an example of the centrality and power of this lived commitment as new teachers were drawn into a pastoral relationship with schoolchildren in a context of increasing social instability in parts of France.

### **The voice of children.**

There are many references to children in the interviews, typically in terms of a developing knowledge of them as different individuals. This is a reciprocal process in that children also begin to see the new teacher as an individual. As this develops more or less successfully (and the interviews suggest that it generally does), then the teacher-pupil relationships build into a working classroom community. One new teacher's expression of his developing identity as a teacher was to become 'a person in a class'; you become accepted as a teacher when 'kids start to see you as a person'.

As part of the EPL project (2005), certain indicators of new teachers' development have been designed. One of these is a 'children's descriptions' indicator. Its design involved seeking responses from children in classrooms through our teacher-researchers. Of the 1130 individual statements from some 100 x 13/14 year old pupils (?check), at least 2/300 refer to behaviour or qualities that are about the person, and a further 1/200 that could be construed in this way rather than as pure teaching skills (e.g. *humorous, relaxed, understanding, friendly, considerate, kind, forgives, not moaney, pays attention to you, happy excited, fair ..... mean, shouts, bad moods, scary, angry, laughing at you, has favourites, embarrasses you*). A similar finding emerged in the Hay McBer study, prior to their categorisation of performance levels of teachers: good teachers, for example, '*stand up for you ... tell the truth ... have faith in you ... are generous*.'

As in the work on pupil voice based at Cambridge (e.g. Ruddock and Flutter 2004), we found that pupils very rarely personalised their criticisms. Like them too, many teachers in our collaborating schools have sought to use the instrument in a formative, self-evaluative capacity, in some cases using the pupil feedback to change their practice. The language that pupils use is also much more specific and practical in a way that teachers can make sense of, in contrast to the decontextualised abstractions of a written standard. It seems that pupils see the person that resides within the teacher, or that **is** the teacher. In voicing such human qualities of their teachers, children themselves show some need to trust or believe in their teacher as a person. In an age of apparently increasing fragmentation of familial security it may be that children become more dependent on teachers as trusted adult persons, as well as for their traditional epistemological and pedagogical responsibilities.

Many children may increasingly need a sense of 'ontological security' (Giddens 1991) themselves from their teachers. The security is reciprocal of course, for teachers (new teachers in particular) are also dependent on their pupils not only for offering a sense of professional purpose, but also for their very acceptance as a teacher - as we have argued above. They draw their self-as-teacher identity and their own ontological security from children, as well as colleagues. This reciprocal ontological security, a conceptual extension of Giddens, is indicative of the teacher-pupil interdependence developing toward something approaching a 'pure relationship' (Giddens 1991) which depends on mutual trust, in which the trust of the other has to be won, in which the individuals have to be trusting and trustworthy within the confines of the relationship, and in which self-identity is negotiated through linked processes of self-exploration and shared histories (p.96, 97). We would argue that this mutuality and interdependence is fundamental to the new teachers' experience and identity formation, and that it transcends the meeting of a professional 'standard'.

## Conclusion

Perhaps it is important, first of all, to clarify what is **not** being argued. Clearly, teaching is dependent on a wide range of knowledge and skills too and is not simply about identity formation. In a sense the new teachers are of course gaining knowledge about their classes and the individual pupils within these classes. They are also coming to terms in most cases with new locations, physical layouts, resources, procedures and accommodation – and we acknowledge these structural, physical and cognitive dimensions\*. However, the narrative base of our data (established through two to three-weekly interviews by insiders) did not uncover during the first four months or so (a half-term approximately) any strong occurrence of references by new teachers to subject knowledge, teaching methods or any of the standard conceptual apparatus of either professional standards or ITE courses (which could range from similar to fairly divergent). Our own view is that there is a latent cognitive dimension of learning to teach and that the new teachers probably have enough knowledge and skills from their ITE courses (including teaching as students in schools) to 'survive' this first phase of starting to teach. This view is based on the fact that they do (with few exceptions) come through this traumatic transition and also the evidence from interviews at and following some four months that cognitive references begin to surface more explicitly. Mention is made around this time of, for example, adapting lessons and resources for different classes.

Our evidence is that beginning teaching is indeed demanding for just about all beginners and special for each beginner. While it may not approach a crisis for everyone, it is more or less transformative for everyone and that is why the transition has to be recognised as an identity shift rather than as a rational progression in the more abstracted concepts or principles of the standard or indeed conventional ITE courses.

What would acceptance of our argument mean for the preparation of teachers? Ideas such as this argument, which we claim is well grounded, cannot just be rendered superfluous because they are not easy to prescribe through theory or sensible policy. Nonetheless, formal statements should surely acknowledge that teaching cannot just be assimilated as a craft or set of technical skills (e.g. clarity of voice, use of power point), or even as parts of professional knowledge (e.g. a Maths curriculum or approaches to difference); these can be learned. The various standards and collections of competence requirements lay out laudable, vaguely articulated aspirations that may help illuminate but cannot of themselves hold the key to successful teaching or acceptance as a teacher.

In a recent seminar on workplace learning (McNally 2005), the gap between occupational standards and actual workplace learning was identified as a genuine issue. The standards were presented as an initial attempt to frame learning outcomes and that they needed to be moved on to a stage where the importance of emotional engagement and of personal qualities could be acknowledged. It emerged in discussion that a dialogue between researchers and policy makers/standard writers was needed to take the expression of standards on to this next stage. The conceptual gap between standards and workplace learning is thus not unique to teaching (in which the school itself is the workplace), or the professions more generally. What is perhaps not widely known is that the writing of the SFR was the product of a research-policy collaboration (McNally, 2001) in which the final document at least acknowledged the possibility that practitioners might use more holistic professional judgements rather than or as well as

more specific competence statements. This was but an initial step of course and it remains to be seen whether, as an occupational standard, the SFR will have in due course the linguistic or political capacity to absorb concepts such as emotion, identity and ontology.

What is not easy to resolve is the extent to which personal qualities and an individual's capacity to do a particular job well, including the ability to teach children well, could be captured in any quantifiable way - or whether certain qualities remained 'unmeasurable'. While we are able in this paper to avoid debating this seemingly perennial polarisation of positions, we are nevertheless compelled by our findings and argument to acknowledge that the preparation of teachers (in ITE and induction) should involve the nurturing of them as individuals, helping them as empathetically as possible to release their individual qualities, and building their confidence and capacity to do the same for others. It is again important to recognise that this has to be balanced with the need to develop a more or less agreed sets of knowledge and skills. In this respect, research should be able to offer indications of the kind of input that matches stages of EPL in as much as these can be identified. Currently, for example, we have examples of formal LA induction input on and on 'getting to know your class' and on 'behaviour management' that have been well received by new teachers during the first few months. These inputs clearly match the concerns that most new teachers have at this time although their success appears to owe more to the quality of the individual presenters than to the topic itself. The main point remains, however, that over-emphasis of knowledge and skills, through, for example, cramming just about all the experienced teacher would need to know into an ITE / induction curriculum, runs the risk of squeezing the space for more sensitive input.

The tension in teacher education between the formality of theory and standards and actual experience and practice is not confined to teachers in this country. In writing about teacher education in Sweden, for example, Carlgren (1996) actually argues that there is a contradiction between the tacit knowledge that teachers draw on in practice and the formal theoretical knowledge about teaching and learning that tends to dictate what they ought to do. Her view is that formal knowledge needs to be grounded in, or integrated with, tacit experience-based knowledge, particularly in the social dimension of learning (p26). Within a structure that offers reasonable coverage of 'expected' topics, it is, therefore, important to resist the presumption that standards can adequately define an ITE curriculum. The agenda might be extended to include, for example, the need to resist demands for ready made solutions (e.g. how to teach) and algorithms (e.g. for behaviour management), and to explain why they should be resisted (e.g. McNally 2005); to ensure space for supporting and engaging with beginners as individuals; to facilitate conversations that allow beginners to talk through their own experiences and reflections with their peers; to observe early lessons with a view to gaining a narrative-based understanding rather than imposing a checklist-driven account; to plant some seeds of further understanding of advanced teaching for the period after survival and acceptance.

We need to begin an exploratory dialogue with the policy-making community that is not a meeting of polar opposites but which recognises the relative absence of reference to the SFR in interviews; acknowledges the emotional as well as the cognitive, the ontological as well as the epistemological; and asks to what extent formal standards and support systems to capture the complex, personal nature of the beginner's experience.

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**Appendix: Selected comments from TES website 2006 on topic 'Really sorry... but I gotta get this off my chest':**

Like a lot of other Probationers who have finished over the last couple of days, I am currently in the position of not having a permanent post to go to.

The world does not owe us a living. However, over the last five or six years, there has been a massive campaign to get people into teaching. We have also been told repeatedly in the media that a) there is a shortage of teachers ...

I have very few complaints about the last year- overall, it was a very positive experience, with a supportive staff, and a lot of wonderful pupils. However, whatever school you are in, the Probationary year is tiring, and it would have been easier if I had not had to get up at 5:45 every morning to drive to work

I have had good feedback from interviews, but in many cases there appeared to have been a favourite internal candidate. I was advised that I should apply for every job that came up, as it was always good experience. Unfortunately, I had to turn down a job I was offered. Although I was aware it was going to be a long commute when i applied, it was only at the school that it was revealed that I would be the only member of my department.

I would have preferred to have had a permanent job to go to, though, as the lack of security is starting to wear me and many others out. Life isn't, of course, fair- but I am far from the only person in this position, and something has to be done.

where do all the stats for supposed teacher shortages come from? surely some government official somewhere has a list in one hand of all the registered teachers in Scotland, and a list in the other of all the actual teaching positions...it's just numbers, right? Then why are there great promises of jobs jobs jobs, yet every second post on here is about teachers who cannot find work...

Now we are in a culture where year after year schools are churning through probationer after probationer. In my school alone we have had 4 probationers for 4 years. The problem is always the same - what happens once the year is up? Well, that probationer stands aside for the next probationer normally and they are left where most of you guys are now - high and dry.

Years ago, you went for interview, got the job and you got a permanent contract - end of. Job was yours as long as you wanted it. You didn't have to move your whole family for ONE year.

It might be fine getting in and teaching for one year to get full registration but you're really in a worse off place than you would be using the old scheme where you took your chances in amongst everyone else - only there was no hassle with internal candidates of people doing their probationer year there so more likely to get the job as the Headie was impressed by them.

As it stands I know people who have taken time out to have a family or go travelling and they just cannot get back into the profession because at every turn where there is a vacancy it just gets filled by a probationer over and over and over again - cheap labour?

In my opinion, the government need to look at this scheme again. As an experienced primary school teacher I just don't think it's working.

Sorry for the rant and I know lots of you out there will disagree but I'm in amongst all the chat of a staffroom year round and believe me, in our staffroom this is how the majority of us feel.

I do hope you all get work of some description. I cannot imagine how unsettling it must be especially when you have financial commitments. Good Luck.