

Early Professional Learning Project



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Open Contribution paper: 'Feeling professional: new teachers and induction'

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The data is used here taken from interviews with 50 new teachers during their induction year in Scotland and England (2004-5), held in the first year of an ongoing TLRP project: 'Enhanced Competence-Based Learning in Early Professional Development' (the EPL project). The focus in this paper is on an important dimension of early professional learning which is relatively neglected in the official models for induction in both countries: the emotional aspect of becoming a teacher. This led to its inclusion in the EPL's own model, in addition to relational/social, structural, physical, cognitive and value/ethical dimensions.

The models underpinning new induction arrangements in England (from 1999) and Scotland (2003) share a basic threefold categorisation as knowledge, skills and values. These were elaborated as 44 Induction Standards (England) and 96 'expected features (competences)' (Scotland's 'Standard for Full Registration'). Despite this detail and apparent relevance, the EPL evidence is that these were seen largely as formal requirement, and failed to enthuse as working documents. The intention is that EPL model will fare better, for two reasons: it is based both on the EPL's qualitative evidence and will continue to respond to practitioner use in subsequent phases. But another problem remains: the strength of any model, its ability to analytically dissect and direct attention to key elements, can also be its weakness in relating it to the more 'holistic' feel of lived experiences. If it fails to connect, it will not be taken up.

The case here for a focus on emotions is that the induction year did come across as an emotional 'roller coaster', so might have a ready appeal. But this has to become a resource for learning. Theories of emotion suggest it can readily link with other elements of such models, provoked by particular events focused on what the new teacher accounts feature as significant: discipline, motivating pupils, relating to other staff and above all, finding ways of relating 'self', values and professional role. Such events in a accounts can become 'the object of reflection' (Bullough and Young 2002). For example, the cognitive theory for emotions distinguishes them from vague overall feeling states of 'moods' (Golby 1996). Anger, fear, elation and so on are always predicated on something, hence can be talked about, analysed, and made part of learning. For instance, a frequent theme for new teacher learning was 'not to react, not to take things personally' (Lewis, new teacher). A key problem was learning to tread the line between 'ogre' and 'best friend' (Geller, new teacher).

In other words, a major concern was with the 'emotional labour' (Hochschild 1983) involved in learning when to express and suppress emotion, to distinguish between display and disguise, what is acceptable or an 'outlaw emotion' (Jaggar 1989). This brings in issues of role and identity in ways that are particularly acute at this stage, whether as triumphs, 'atrocious stories' (Silverman 1993), or less extreme satisfactions and disappointments. This focus also raises the unwanted prospect of making emotion merely another formal competence, audited for the management of the 'emotional order of the school' (Hartley 2004) and the profession itself.

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