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What makes a good
induction supporter?

Using the voices of student
teachers

What makes a good induction supporter?

Abstract

The Teacher Induction Scheme, introduced in 2002, marked the first major change to new teacher induction in Scotland in 37 years. This paper gives an outline of these changes set against developments in mentoring theory in the wider context. It argues that the personal qualities of the induction supporter is crucial to developing an effective mentoring relationship. The views of student teachers are used to describe preferred characteristics of effective mentors and effective induction provision. A person specification is created by the comments of the “Class of 2002” – the first probationer teachers to have taken part in the Scheme.

Keywords: teacher induction, probationer teachers, induction supporters, mentoring

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1. Introduction

This paper provides an initial examination of the procedures of the new Teacher Induction Scheme in Scotland. It describes the views of a group of student teachers about to embark upon their first year as new teachers. This student group was unique in that it

would be among the first to experience the Teacher Induction Scheme (TIS) in Scotland. Their preferences were sought on a range of issues such as the structure of their induction into teaching, the traits of their induction supporter, their development needs and the role of the teacher education institutions in their future support and development. This paper focuses on the research question, ‘What kind of support do new teachers want from their induction supporter?’ The importance of a good mentoring relationship, as described by the student group and implied in a newly created post of induction supporter within the TIS, suggests that the induction supporter is the key to an effective induction placement for new teachers. The discussion of these findings and the ensuing recommendations provide a potential model to assist in identifying induction supporters for the Scheme.

2. Changes in teacher induction

2.1 The Past in Scotland

There has been a Scottish system of induction into the teaching profession for many years. A legal precedent for a formal system of induction was set in The Teaching Council (Scotland) Act 1965. The Act created the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS). Its first task was to ensure no “uncertificated teachers” were practising in Scottish schools. GTCS went on to set up a register of all teachers and had powers to issue provisional or full registration. Newly trained teachers were provisionally registered for 2 years. A final report was submitted at the end of 2 years service along with the recommendation for full registration to the Council. This period was referred to as the probationary period and new teachers were known as probationer teachers.

The probationary process was accepted widely as an appropriate way to monitor the progress of new teachers. The GTCS worked with schools and local authorities to make every attempt to support probationer teachers as they progressed towards full registration. This was demonstrated in the comments of the recently retired GTC Registrar (p.986, Sutherland, 2000). Even so, there was recognition by the GTCS and others that the progress of many probationers was hampered by the increasing number of short term supply contracts being given to them. Probationers were being exposed to a disparate range of experiences in different schools and different local authorities. “A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century” referred to this way of gaining full registration as “little short of scandalous” (p.7, SEED, 2000).

2.2 The Present in Scotland

In the new Scheme, all teacher graduates from Scottish universities are entitled to a training placement – of one year duration - in one of 32 local authorities from August 2002. Funds are devolved from central government to meet the costs of the placement. Each probationary teacher works towards achieving the benchmarks provided in the new Standard for Full Registration (SEED, 2002) as part of their continuing professional development (CPD) and to gain full registration for teaching. Without full registration, probationers are unable to apply for a permanent contract in any Scottish school. The induction framework articulates with the benchmarks set out for initial teacher education and linked with the new Chartered Teacher Standard. The training placement provides a limited weekly timetable of class contact - 0.7 of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) teaching contract - and guaranteed time for continuing development (0.3 FTE) each week for

probationer teachers. This time will be used to meet individually with an induction supporter, to undertake planning and CPD activities.

The induction supporter is likely to be an identified person within the school who has to be released for the equivalent of ½ day per week for each probationer supported. They have to carry out tasks associated with the induction process. These tasks will include meeting with probationer teacher/s individually to provide advice or feedback, carrying out classroom observation, organizing CPD, report writing and participating in tri-partite meetings with probationers and others. Their release from other duties has been funded by central government. Most local authorities have begun to organise training for their induction supporters although this will vary in content and format across Scotland as no national programme of CPD has been formalized.

The probationer teachers have more responsibility than previously. They will have to work closely with the induction supporter to identify their strengths and points for action. A record of all engagement in CPD activities and participation in meetings must be maintained. The probationers will be expected to build up a portfolio, to include evidence in support of their achievement in each benchmark listed in the Standard for Full Registration (SFR), and an evaluation of their personal progress. In addition, the induction supporter and the headteacher will complete two reports – the Interim and Final Profile - on the probationer's performance, to be submitted to the GTCS, during the training placement.

2.3 Developments in Mentoring

New teacher induction is part of a process of socialization which takes place in any organisation. In education, this process aids the assimilation of new teachers into the culture of the school (Lortie, 1975, Hargreaves & Woods, 1984). It helps them to assume the values and behaviours accepted by the dominant culture of the school. In other words, the socialisation process and the professional culture perpetuate the existing beliefs, standards and practices; impacting on the long-term performance of the novice teacher (Feiman-Nemser, 1983, Huling-Austin, 1990). The sway of the induction supporter in the socialisation of new teachers cannot be overlooked. It has been recognised in induction systems used in Europe and the US. (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2001, Chubbuck et al, 2001). In the UK, Smith (2001) suggests, the induction tutor or supporter becomes the gatekeeper to the profession. Conforming to the gatekeepers' vision of a good teacher is essential in the probationer teacher's pursuit of full registration even if this is not a desirable goal for the probationer teacher nor the profession.

So there is a power relationship between induction supporter and probationer teacher which has to be scrutinised in order to make it as open and equitable as possible if the induction process is to fulfill the goal of providing a consistent experience for probationer teachers across Scotland (SEED, 2000). The power of the induction supporter to withhold the probationer's access to full registration is evident in the formal procedures created. How that power is wielded is determined by the interactions of individual induction supporters and probationers in the context of their own school and the personal as well as professional qualities these individuals possess to negotiate those interactions

(Martin & Rippon, 2003). These qualities will determine the ways in which the mentoring relationship develops and what roles the induction supporter will adopt most readily.

There has been much written about mentoring relationships relating to teaching and other professions. There is some agreement about the roles a mentor should fulfill in a mentoring scheme. The role of mentor has been well established in nursing education for a considerable time. Suen and Chow (2001) set out 5 roles for nursing mentors as befriending, advising, counseling, guiding and assisting in Hong Kong. Feiman-Nemser (2001) recommends 'educative mentoring' as a strategy to use in the 40 American states which operate or plan teacher induction processes. Educative mentoring has two dimensions: emotional support providing a comfortable relationship and environment for the new teacher to develop; and professional support based on a principled understanding of teachers and how they learn. The Novice Teacher Support Project in Illinois identified the new teachers' perceived needs to be: the need for practical, logistical information; the chance to have practical exchanges with experienced teachers; reflective discussions with peers and emotional support independent of any "pressure to conform" (p.373, Chubbuck et al., 2001). These perspectives provide an outline of current thinking about mentoring roles in the wider context.

Interestingly, Suen & Chow noted how students' perceptions of what made a good mentor changed at different points of their work experience placement. Initially, the students valued the advice and friendship of their mentor most. In the latter stages, the

students still sought advice but also valued counselling. It can be assumed that the mentoring relationship is not static. It varies according to the demands made of the student or probationer and their changing confidence levels and this should be taken into account when using the data from this study. The desirable qualities and support mechanisms identified by the respondents as completing student teachers may vary as they enter different phases of their teacher induction placement. Nonetheless, effective mentoring appears to combine official procedural roles (i.e. observing, advising, assessing) and befriending, counselling roles. The best mentors are those who can negotiate their way through the shifting sands of support at the right time for each person, allowing the power to shift accordingly. Spindler and Biott (2000) support this view of teacher development where the relationship changes from one of 'structured support' to 'emerging collegueship'.

However, many forms of mentoring in education tend to focus on a mode of learning where an expert teacher passes on knowledge and skills to a novice colleague in a less equitable professional relationship (Hargreaves, 1988, Tickle, 2001). Criticisms of this apprenticeship model revolve around claims that it fails to give recognition to the existing skills and knowledge of the new teacher; it encourages deference to experience regardless of the quality of experience and it encourages new teachers to conform to existing practices whilst prohibiting the development of new approaches and regeneration of the profession. Brown and McIntyre's (1986) thesis that experienced teachers find it difficult to articulate professional knowledge casts other doubts on the validity of apprenticeship models.

A background in the practical development of induction and mentoring processes in Scottish education has been provided in this section. Developments in mentoring theory in the wider context helps to set the scene for this study as it turns now to gathering the perceptions of student teachers about the kind of support they would expect induction supporters to offer new teachers.

3. Methodology

3.1 Interactionist Theory

The research was designed to take account of micro-politics at work in schools as they impact on the operation of TIS. The perspective taken was that human action or change takes place in a social context, therefore, TIS will not succeed as an effective induction experience based upon a deterministic operation of structures and procedures alone. It will depend upon the interaction of different actors in the social arena - the interaction of the new teacher and the induction supporter in the context of the Induction Scheme. This paper examines the potential of this relationship using the interactionist viewpoint of the Chicago School of Sociology researchers (Dewey, 1974). They took the view that lives are not compartmentalized and there is a crucial interactive relationship between individuals' lives, perceptions and experiences with historical or social contexts and individuals negotiating their identities in the world in which they live (Goodson and Sikes, 2001). In so doing, symbolic interactionism provided a vehicle for challenging the intellectual assumptions found in social policy discourse using the subjective perceptions of those affected by the policy.

Nelson (1993) claimed that life experiences have to be viewed from 3 perspectives simultaneously for symbolic or social interactionism to have occurred and meanings to be deduced from them as a result. Firstly, the *structural perspective* is concerned with the representation of the event and its impact on the participant's life. In this study, this pertains to the procedural ramifications of the induction process. Secondly, the *functional perspective* is concerned with examining the event itself. The event looked at here is the induction experience as it is manifested in the development of the mentoring relationship between the probationer teacher and induction supporter. Thirdly, the *valuational perspective* is an interpretation of the impact of the event on and why it had that influence. This pertains to the student teachers' perceptions of effective mentoring characteristics. An interactionist approach facilitated the gathering of these different perspectives as legitimate forms of data – the policy discourse, current literature on mentoring theories and the perceptions of Scottish student teachers - to enrich future induction policy discourse and its implementation. The study was a collaborative venture between two Scottish universities to gather data on current induction theory, changes in induction processes in Scotland and the perceptions of student teachers on induction. A literature review was undertaken and policy documents pertaining to induction undertaken.

3.2 Data Collection

A questionnaire was designed to gather data from final year student teachers from Bachelor of Education, Postgraduate Primary and Secondary courses in the two universities. This provided a sample population of 1136 students. As well as gathering

demographic information about the sample, their valuational perspectives on the type of support new teachers sought during their induction placement, their views of assessment processes and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) were sought. Both open and closed questions were used to access quantitative and qualitative data. The closed questions required respondents to rank answers using a Likert scale. (The questionnaire is included as Appendix 1.)

The postal survey was issued in February 2002 when most students were engaged with their final or penultimate school placement before embarking on their induction placement. There was a concern that the student teachers would be consumed by placement requirements and this might lead to a poor response rate. Nonetheless, it was agreed that the consultation process going on in teacher education institutions and in local authorities had generated enough attention and interest to encourage student teachers to respond and have their voices heard at this time of change. There were 271 respondents to the survey representing 24% of the final year, student teacher cohort in the Teacher Education Institutions (TEI) being studied. The breakdown of the sample according to Initial Teacher Education course is given in Table I. The sample over-represents Postgraduate Certificate in Education (Secondary) students slightly. This anomaly can be explained by the ease of access to secondary students who were not engaged in school placements at the time and questionnaires could be distributed and returned on TEI campuses. This could weaken the finding as the needs of primary and secondary student teachers may be perceived to differ but the researchers agreed to persist with this sample

as there were no plans to differentiate between these groups of new teachers in the official induction process.

Table I: Breakdown according to ITE course of respondents and all final year students.

3.3 Data Analysis

The quantitative data was collated using SPSS software to check for statistical significance. The responses to open questions were collated into commonly emerging themes. Each researcher – one from each university - independently noted key headings she attributed to the responses given to each question in the first 20 questionnaires. The researchers compared headings and defining characteristics until a moderated guide was created for both researchers to apply to the questionnaires in the collation process. This comparative process was repeated after 50 questionnaires had been collated to allow redundant headings to be removed and headings with similar definitions to be collapsed together after discussion between the researchers from both universities.

The results of the postal survey were used to devise a set of prompts to be used at a focus group interview. (The term “respondents” will be used when referring to data from the postal survey. Focus group data will be separated by the use of the term “participants” within the report.) A focus group of 8 participants focused on features of the mentoring relationship in an open discussion. Their comments were used to unpack issues further and these are used in this paper alongside the comments from the survey.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Organisation of Induction Support

The student teachers mentioned repeatedly the importance of having time with a good mentor as a key concern in their experience of the induction placements. One respondent described an effective induction supporter as one who would, “be able to listen, offer constructive criticism and offer time”. The respondents supported a formal provision of time for induction support. Ninety nine per cent asked for regular feedback on at least a monthly or termly basis. Almost half the sample (48%) gave their first choice of format as formal, one-to-one meetings with their induction supporter. This preference seems to be met in the new induction arrangements. The next most popular choice was informal, individualised support with 21% of respondents preferring this method as their first choice.

The Scheme provides the opportunity for probationary teachers to have an equal chance in terms of access to time and support to achieve the benchmarks necessary for full registration and the ability to seek a permanent teaching position. The post of induction supporter carries considerable powers and responsibilities. The induction supporter’s role will be crucial in ensuring each new teacher receives their appropriate entitlement (i.e. support, advice and feedback). The post of induction supporter is accompanied by funding for a formal allocation of time. This is national recognition of how the work of the induction supporter is seen to underpin the success of the Teacher Induction Scheme. It will be interesting to see if this time allocation is provided regularly for the probationer and the induction supporter. It may be tempting to use the funding source for other

things. The experience in England (Totterdell et al, 2002) suggests that time entitlements are not always provided in schools despite the procedures established to facilitate this. The implementation of operational frameworks can be undermined by those charged with responsibility for carrying them out.

The focus group participants supported this view of the importance of providing time for the induction supporter and probationer teacher to meet. However, they expressed a range of views about how regular these meetings should be. Some voiced the opinion that they should be 'start to space out if you're doing okay' whilst others worried what it would feel like "if I had meetings and other probationers in the school didn't, I'd know it was because I was failing'. This highlights a dilemma for an induction process designed to bring more equity to the experiences of new teachers nationwide in that by seeking to provide consistency, support may not be targeted to where it is needed most. Instead, everyone is given the same time with their induction supporter regardless of need.

The students were asked to describe what the key features of a good induction placement would be. This was an open question. Their responses were grouped under 5 headings taken from common emergent themes. The significant feature, for final year students about to embark upon their training placement, was to have information and input from local authority and school management about the policy, procedures and resources. This has been borne out by other work with Scottish probationer teachers (Draper, 1992, GTCS, 2000).

Table II: Features of a Useful Induction Placement

“Mentor support” and “feedback on performance” were given great prominence in a successful placement. The induction supporter will carry out both these roles and combining these features suggests that effective mentoring scores very highly (91%).

4.2 Supporting and Assessing Roles

The formal processes outlined in TIS emphasise advising, guiding and assisting as effective mentoring with the addition of a substantial assessing role for induction supporters. The inclusion of the assessment role changes the nature of the relationship. It ensures the balance of power lies with the induction supporter from the outset with little room to change the balance during the induction placement. This will impact on the dynamics of the interactions between the probationer and their mentor.

The majority of respondents (53%) accepted that the same person could undertake the roles associated with support and those based on assessment simultaneously, illustrating their preference with comments such as, “I feel this would be useful as this person could work closely with you and get to know you and your style”. However, 16% of the respondents did not want the support and assessment roles to be met by one person as stated earlier. “On the one hand it is good for someone to know about my whole progress and be able to offer advice based on this. On the other hand it may make the supporter less approachable.” Bleach (2001) recommends each new teacher should be given two mentors and his model of mentoring may address the conflict of views described by our student group.

These respondents had experienced up to 6 school placements during their course at the time of the study. On each of the placements, they were supervised by at least two people. Typically, this would include a University tutor and a class teacher. So student teachers, about to take up a training post in TIS, have a degree of experience of mentoring relationships. They are used to engaging with a process of supervision incorporating the conflicting roles of support and guidance with monitoring and assessment. As a result these student teachers have an awareness of what factors make for a good supervision experience or a good mentoring relationship. They have more recent and relevant experience than many of the induction supporters who will lead or control this relationship. Their voices should be used to help determine the nature of interactions likely to be most profitable in terms of their development as professionals.

It is clear the respondents recognise the influence the induction supporter will have in the TIS. The supporter's ability to support and advise the new teacher as well as his/her input into the assessment of the probationary teachers' progress is influential. Taking on both roles will demand a wide range of professional and personal skills or attributes from the induction supporter. The respondents' views echo those of significant researchers in the field of teacher education (Calderhead and Shorrock, 1997, Hauge, 2000). Hauge (2000) explained that 20% of Norwegian student teachers in his study experienced communication difficulties with the person supervising their placement. This impacted on their learning experience. A similar number of newly qualified teachers in England described their induction experiences as less than satisfactory (Totterdell et al, 2002). In

such a context, the personal qualities of the induction supporter may be one key to ensuring a satisfactory induction relationship.

4.3 Personal Qualities

The respondents were given free range to determine the most effective professional and personal traits of an induction tutor. In essence, the students were being asked to write a person specification for the induction supporter post. It was evident the respondents valued personal traits (e.g. approachability, empathy) above professional traits (e.g. length of service, teaching credibility) in a mentoring relationship (Table III).

This is not wholly surprising. It is inevitable that a close working relationship over time will be influenced by the kinds of personalities involved. Open responses in the questionnaires stated induction supporters should be “sympathetic to the needs and problems facing new teachers”. They should “have time to spend with you discussing problems and how to deal with them”. An induction supporter should “be friendly and supportive so that they don’t feel like an examiner”. It is manifest that any potential induction supporter will have to command impressive interpersonal skills to be able to meet the expectations of probationary teachers (Martin & Rippon, 2003).

Table III: Induction Supporter: Desired Personal and Professional Qualities

The respondents put personal characteristics, marking out the induction supporter’s “approachability” at the top of their list (86% of respondents mentioned it once or more).

The respondents were keen to specify that the induction supporter should be “someone who wants to do the job”. Many had experience of working with teachers who had been “conscripted” to work with students by the headteacher. Some had “their arms twisted” to take on the responsibility. The respondents were clear that the mentoring relationship suffered as a result. When asked to describe desirable personal and professional traits, they listed comments such as the induction supporter should be “willing to help, keen to do this job, not merely forced to”.

The participants were very keen to be treated in an equitable manner within the school setting. They were very conscious of the existence of a distinct school culture (Lortie, 1975, Lacey, 1977, Hargreaves & Woods, 1984). There was a definitive hierarchy or pecking order in many schools placing student teachers at the very bottom. Focus group discussions highlighted the students’ anxiety that they not be “treated like a student” in the induction year. The participants relayed incidents where they were referred to as “the student” rather than being referred to by name within earshot. They described the demeaning impact this had on them. As probationers, they hoped this situation would not continue. They hoped their new colleagues, especially their induction supporter, would “respect you as an equal member of staff, regardless of your lack of experience”. Being referred to as “the probationer” was just as demeaning. Indeed, one respondent suggested it was like having a “probation officer” rather than an induction supporter. This is a powerful image, painting the probationer teacher as an unruly suspect in need of control and supervision, instead of a fully qualified professional.

4.4 Professional Attributes

Interestingly, professional attributes were mentioned in seemingly conflicting terms. Some respondents would prefer their supporter to be relatively new to teaching, anticipating this category of teacher would be more “sympathetic to my plight”. Others would expect a more experienced teacher to support them appearing to link an experienced teacher to “being in the know”. This conflict was explored with the participants in the focus group. All participants in the focus group could cite new and experienced teachers, on school placements, who had given good support. They frequently used the phrase, “it all comes down to the type of person”. This seems to reinforce the importance of personal qualities in the induction supporter over professional abilities as suggested from the survey results.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Organisational Issues

The protection of a time allocation for mentoring to take place is important to new teachers as indicated in this paper. Totterdell et al.’s (2002) report suggests that having procedures in place does not always protect this time in reality. The demands on schools and local authorities are excessive and in such an environment it may be expedient to hand over the designated mentoring time to another pressing demand. It is imperative that this should not be allowed to happen if there is a genuine commitment to the importance of induction and the mentoring relationship.

Yet this does not mean that the provision of this time allocation has to be fixed for all probationer teachers throughout the duration of their induction placement. Our respondents were reassured by the formal structure of the induction scheme. They welcomed regular meetings with the induction supporter. However, the regularity of the meetings may become less welcome as probationer teachers move through their induction placement and seek more independence as some of the focus group participants explained. Induction supporters will have to provide signals to their probationer teachers that diminishing support is a reflection of their growing confidence and ability in the probationer teacher, and that this is to be welcomed. This has to be timed sensitively – according to need not timetable - by the induction supporter. If structured support is removed too early, the probationer teacher may be reluctant to ask for its reinstatement. This could be construed as showing signs of weakness. If it continues indefinitely, the probationer teacher's professional growth receives no recognition. Probationer teachers deserve the provision of a differentiated approach to their professional learning in a similar way to how they are expected to provide differentiated support to their pupils in their learning.

The student teachers stressed the importance of time for feedback as well as individual time with their mentor and this may not have to be with the induction supporter. Indeed, the early documentation for TIS suggests that there will be a whole school responsibility for supporting new teachers. The creative use of allocated support time facilitates the implementation of differentiated mentoring for probationer teachers to include a range of feedback opportunities and one-to-one mentoring. For example, the allowance of a ½ day

per week induction support time can be shared between 2 or more teachers in the probationers' school in a variety of ways (Bleach, 2001). Bleach (2001) advocates a protégé-mentor relationship with an experienced teacher and a buddy mentor relationship with a recently qualified teacher to ease the transition from student to new teacher. The protégé-mentor could carry out formal observations, feedback and reporting sessions on a fortnightly basis. The buddy-mentor could work with the probationer in team-teaching situations, joint planning sessions in class as well as fortnightly meetings for informal counselling and befriending roles (Suen & Chow, 2001). There are many organisational variations to be employed in order to maximise the support structures offered through the Scheme's mechanisms. This highlights how the basic recommendations of TIS allow good practice to evolve beyond the minimum requirements. The only legal mandate is that the probationer teacher has to be assessed against the Standard for Full Registration.

5.2 Delivering Support and Assessment

The majority of student teachers had no difficulty accepting that one person could undertake the support and assessment roles without prejudice. This will be the normative practice in Scottish schools with the introduction of TIS. However, the conflicting statements given by respondents about the professional attributes of an effective mentor may suggest that having two or more mentors may increase the potential to meet all the development needs of the new teacher as well as providing a network for the mentors themselves. The notion of multiple mentors could be explored in Scottish schools to help involve all existing teachers in the induction of new teachers.

In addition, the criticisms levied at apprenticeship models of teacher induction generally suggest that mentoring networks may go some way towards countering the perceived conformity these models engender. At a time when Scotland's First Minister (McConnell, 2001) stated the need to "release the creativity of our teachers", it seems unwise to charge only one or two people with the role of assessing the new teachers. If teachers have set ideas about what makes an effective teacher, they may measure the new teacher against those ideas without considering alternatives. The assessment procedure may encourage the new teacher to conform to pre-determined practices and principles whilst abandoning any new ideas they may wish to explore and creativity may be discouraged.

Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that one person cannot undertake the formal and informal responsibilities expected of the induction supporter with good effect. It depends on the type of person and their interpersonal skills as evidenced by the voices of the respondents. The next section brings together what these interpersonal skills and the professional abilities of the induction supporter might look like.

5.3 The Person Specification

The student teachers voiced clear views about the personal and professional qualities that an effective induction supporter should hold, based on their experience of mentoring relationships. School managers should give careful consideration to how the induction supporter is selected and the ramifications of this selection on the induction experience for the probationer teachers. A "person specification" has been composed, using the

comments of the respondents, and it may prove a helpful tool to engage in this task (Figure 1). If schools begin to develop person specifications as well as full job descriptions for the induction supporter posts and share this with staff, it may influence the people who will consider themselves suitable for the post. It could be used to inform interested parties of the requirements and in criteria-led selection processes to appoint a suitable candidate to the post.

Figure 1: Person Specification

The person specification encapsulates the general views of the respondents as given in the survey. It is apparent that an empathy with probationer teachers and their anxieties in the early stages of induction is a key feature of the specification. The quest for equal status and treatment as a colleague plays a major part of this anxiety as described earlier. Induction supporters have to be aware of the sensitivities felt by new teachers at a critical time in their careers (Sikes, Measor & Woods, 2001). They should be working to ensure probationers enjoy equal rights and status within the school community. Their contribution as people, as well as professionals, should be valued. The induction supporter has to challenge aspects of internalized teacher behaviour on behalf of the probationer teacher. One respondent summarized the role of the induction supporter to be “assertive, willing to speak up for probationers’ concerns and needs”.

Respondents seemed concerned that the induction supporter should not be, “too domineering of probationers”. The relationship between induction supporter and probationer teacher should transform into emerging collegueship (Spindler and Biott,

2000). This can be achieved by allowing the probationer teacher to have an independent identity within the school and amongst other colleagues. The probationer should be seen to be operating independently of their induction supporter. They should be given opportunities to take wider responsibility in the whole school setting. These were important goals for the focus group participants in creating their own positive teacher identity. Spindler and Biott (2000) describe successful examples of new teacher induction that include the transition from a relationship of support and development to one which allows the new teacher to contribute to a team, taking on specific responsibilities in a whole school setting and earning their identity as an established teacher.

The nature of the interactions developing between probationer teacher, induction supporter and other colleagues are crucial to the professional development of the probationer. The views, attitudes and perceptions of these three groups and the interface between them will impinge upon how the probationer teacher progresses in gaining their own identity as an established teacher in the school context as well as in their own mind. The induction supporter has to manage the exchanges to enhance the probationer teacher's contribution to the school and their own professional and personal development. These relationships determine the social reality of the probationer teacher's induction placement.

The supporter should be able to transcend the dominant practices of the school and recognise good teaching in all its shapes and forms. Recognition of "good but different" should be applied in the assessment of probationer teachers. The encouragement of

diversity is as appropriate in teaching as it is in a wider social context. The induction supporter should have enough confidence in their own abilities to allow the probationer certain freedoms to evolve their own style and practices without this being a valued judgment on the induction supporter's style. The Teacher Induction Scheme will still allow insightful induction supporters to encourage probationer teachers to flourish in such a collaborative way. Indeed, the competences set out in the Standard for Full Registration suggest it is a necessary part of the induction placement (p.38, GTCS, 2002b).

The first round of recruits to the role of induction supporter may already meet the person specification set out above. Where this is not the case, professional development opportunities should be made available to existing supporters or potential candidates to help maximize the impact of the induction process. It is evident from the respondents' views that planned development will have to include activities to develop a range of interpersonal skills as well as professional knowledge about the induction process and procedures themselves.

6. Conclusion

The enormity of the task of devising TIS and matching 2300 newly qualified teachers to school placements simultaneously resulted in last minute preparations for receiving probationary teachers in schools. Local authorities and school managers moved swiftly to identify induction supporters to help make the system work on the ground. Although supporters will be given time to work with the probationers, there is no remuneration for

doing so suggesting that s/he will have to be highly committed to the success of the Scheme. An effective process to identify suitable induction supporters is a crucial step towards this and the person specification, created from the data, may provide a useful tool in the process.

The person specification lays down a template for induction supporters to evaluate their support. The induction supporter has to be familiar with procedures and requirements to be secure in their knowledge and understanding of TIS and to aid their confidence and clarity in fulfilling their role. However, the development of induction supporters will have to go beyond mechanistic features of induction, providing opportunities to develop their inter-personal skills fully. The need for them to be conscious of the impact of the socialisation process at work in schools and to possess the personal qualities valued so highly by student teachers to engage with this is highlighted in the person specification. The skills of working in an evolving relationship with the probationer teacher in an honest collaboration, if not an equal partnership, needs to be highlighted. It is a job of considerable responsibility, not least because the people involved will help to shape the futures of probationer teachers and the teaching profession.

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