Perspectives on Early Professional Learning

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Introduction

The keynote session on Early Professional Learning (EPL) was based on the ESRC funded research project 'Enhanced Competence-based Learning in Early Professional Development'. It consisted of four brief presentations followed by free informal discussions centred on five posters and a final question-and-answer session. Delegates were given a pack containing the PowerPoint slides and copies of the posters.

The presentations covered an overview of the EPL Project, the relational and emotional dimensions of EPL, job satisfaction of new teachers, the contrast between learning to teach as a rite-of passage initiation and as the meeting of a professional standard.

The posters covered the five indicators of new teachers' development that were developed in the project: job satisfaction, interactivity, children's descriptions, expert judgement, pupil development.

The detailed overview of the project – aims, methods, scale, timing – are readily accessed on the project website: http://www.ioe.stir.ac.uk/research/projects/epl/index.php

Arguments are also more fully presented in the publications section of the website, particularly the following papers:

> Boreham, N. (2005) An Instrument for Measuring the Job Satisfaction of Newly Qualified Teachers;
> Corbin, B. & Stronach, I. (2006) Professionalism on Probation: Induction and New Teachers in Scotland.
> McNally, J. (2005) From informal learning to identity formation: a conceptual journey in early teacher development.
> Stronach, I. & Corbin, B. (2007) The Invention of Teachers: How Beginning Teachers Learn

Main Points in the Presentations

The following is a summary of the main points made in the presentations.

1. Relationality

This is a major conceptual theme, proposed in our earlier research, where we identified informal relational support as 'natural mentoring' and suggested that the experience of new teachers was governed by 'relational conditions' with colleagues and pupils. This was supported later e.g. 'informal support from people on the spot' Eraut (2004).

2. Interactivity

The 'interact' indicator was developed to gain some further detail of interactions, for example the order of importance of particular persons or groups.

Mean scores of the rank ordering (1-12) of most significant person with whom NTs interact					
Person category	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teacher your department	46	1	7	2.83	1.539
Pupils I teach	44	1	9	2.84	2.145
PT or faculty head	47	1	12	3.21	2.095
Mentor/supporter	46	1	9	3.52	2.178
Other new teacher	46	1	9	4.13	2.072
Teacher in nearby room	39	1	12	4.49	3.128
Family or friends	45	1	11	4.62	2.766
Teacher other department	43	1	10	5.70	1.934
Other staff	43	2	11	6.42	2.096
Senior manage team	44	1	10	6.64	2.263
LEA staff	29	2	12	8.21	2.731
Other	12	5	12	8.50	2.355

3. Other literature

Some connections were made with the wider literature, for example:

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 (cognitive, emotional, social) and have to do with the very identity of the learner (Illeris)

Learning is an inherently emotional process embedded within a relational context … an accepted concept of the development of self and identity (Bosma and Kunnen)

There is an ethical nexus inscribed in relations with others in the workplace
It is Inescapable and bound up with technical skills
It is important for human flourishing and for the quality of work that is done (Hinchcliffe)

Pupils obtain 'ontological security' through their teachers (Giddens) - this is reciprocal as new teachers are dependent on their pupils for a sense of professional purpose and acceptance as a teacher – suggesting a reciprocal ontological security'

the concept of a 'relational self' (Hoveid and Hoveid from Schibbye) - conveys agency and purpose in a self that is intrinsically dependent on pupils, colleagues and others for its emergence and expression

'biographicity' - the capacity that people have that could not be taught by experts … their uniqueness as a resource for building new relationships (Alheit and Dausien)

self can never be a self-sufficient construct (Bakhtin) … places radical emphasis on particularity and situatedness … abstract questions about selfhood only pursued as specific questions about location

4. Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction can be defined as the degree of need fulfilment experienced by an individual through work (*Dinham and Scott, 1998*). A job can be decomposed into several elements known as *job dimensions.* Individuals are aware of their satisfaction or dissatisfaction. This can be measured by asking individuals to report these feelings using a rating scale e.g. *very satisfied, satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied.*

Why is Job Satisfaction an Important Outcome of the Induction Year? a) for ethical reasons, new teachers should find the induction year a positive experience b) in the helping professions, any factors that undermine job satisfaction are also likely to undermine professionalism c) high levels of job *dissatisfaction* are associated with resignations.

What Underlies Ratings of Job Satisfaction? Satisfiers' – intrinsic sources of a sense of achievement or fulfilment of needs – and 'Dissatisfiers' – extrinsic sources of displeasure, frustration, unhappiness etc.

Data generated by the EPL Project was from Teacher-Researchers' observations and interviews with 18 new teachers throughout the induction year. A survey was conducted of 150 new teachers in 5 Scottish Local Authorities towards the end of the first term and in the first half of the second term. A 5-point scale was used from very satisfied to very dissatisfied

5. **Most Satisfying Job Dimensions** were:
1. Recognition by the pupils of your status as a teacher.
2. Your working relationship with your departmental colleagues.
3. Support from your subject mentor.
4. Support from other colleagues in the department.
5. Your relationship with pupils in the classroom.

Least Satisfying Job Dimensions were:
36. The availability of material resources for teaching.
37. Your salary as a probationary teacher.
38. The balance between work and private life.
39. Pupil behaviour in the school.
40. The availability of permanent posts in your subject.

6. **The main sources of job satisfaction**

Paramount is the recognition of the newcomer's status as a teacher and the establishment of good working relationships with pupils and colleagues.

Arguably, the development task at this stage is 'fitting in' – building relationships with the pupils, becoming a valued member of the departmental team, achieving the identity of a (real) teacher.

The main source of satisfaction for established teachers - helping children achieve and overcome their difficulties – is not prominent in the early stages of probation.

7. **New teachers and emotional labour**

I've taken a few risks in class, like my colouring the chloroplast photosynthesis day where I did these cartoons ... And I put the overhead up and I remember going bright red and feeling so nervous ... And it succeeded so well and because I had taken that wee risk and shown the kids your personality, and they really respond to that ... I think that's the main way that I've learned anything since I've come'

8. **EPL Model: the emotional as dimension and as process**

New teacher talk
- as readily flowing between dimensions not as strictly separated competences
- as connecting particular to holistic

Emotional as cognition, as ethical (values), as structure, as relational etc
- as process e.g. how to invent teacher self as both 'strict and nice'
- as personal (embodied – gender, age etc)

EPL Model and Policy Models - a process of dialogue?

Policy models as bureaucratic auditing; competences as discrete, fixed, impersonal - EPL dimensions as interrelated, dynamic, personal BUT two discourses capable of connection (as above with differentiation)

Metaphorically – one (the standard) is a set of bones, a skeleton of something but with no life; the other (the lived experience) is dynamic, feeling, changing and growing.

9. **Recommendations**

- use of new teacher accounts in teacher preparation – EPL model for understanding and engaging with formal competence-based model
- allowing for flexibility in prioritising competences of formal model (especially induction year)
- CPD (and time) for induction professionals – making the links
- further developing formal induction from within professional practices

Posters of the Indicators

E-copies of the posters used at the keynote session are on the project website, as well as brief descriptions of the indicators:

http://www.ioe.stir.ac.uk/research/projects/epl/indicators.php