# Career changers and fast-track induction:

# teacher perspectives on their early professional development

Article for Teacher Development

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# Career changers and fast-track induction: teacher perspectives on their early professional development

**Abstract**

In this article, the early professional development of mature, early career teachers who entered the profession via an employment-based route to teaching in England are presented and explored from the teachers' own perspectives. From a larger sample in a longitudinal study, the development of four career changers is traced in detail, using a model of professional learning which highlights teaching and professional skills. There is some evidence that those who undertake the programme experience a smoother induction into teaching than those from more traditional routes, although the internship year itself is challenging and demands a high level of commitment and resilience on the part of the pre-service teachers. Contextual factors, such as school support and learning from experienced teachers, are vital in enabling early professional development and the absence of these can hinder learning and self-confidence. Findings are analysed with reference to the model, as well as research on teachers' development, within a socio-cultural learning framework. The study makes a valuable contribution to knowledge about the professional development of mature entrants to teaching.

**Introduction**

This paper focuses on the early career development of mature career changers, who entered teaching via an employment-based route in England called the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP). The study is grounded in a socio-cultural perspective of teachers' professional learning which, it is argued, is particularly relevant to an exploration of school-based approaches to teacher education and development.

Following an exploratory study (Griffiths 2007) which focused on the pre-service experiences of teachers on a newly-established primary Graduate Teacher Programme, this study follows beginning teachers on four well-established GTPs through their first to third years of teaching, exploring their early career experiences. The research questions that informed the study are: What relevant skills and experience do mature entrants to teaching bring to their professional practice? What are the characteristics of the internship, induction and early career experiences for mature career changers who learn to teach on the Graduate Teacher Programme? What is the nature of these teachers' professional learning and development in the school contexts?  In particular, patterns of professional development are explored and contextual factors affecting the progress of early career teachers; for instance, levels of support provided by the schools and types of professional learning, such as learning from experienced practitioners.

**Context of the enquiry: the Graduate Teacher Programme**

School-based teacher education is now well established world-wide (e.g. Brisard et al 2005; Lewin and Stuart 2003), although the particular forms that it takes have

developed in many different ways (cf. Eraut 2000), for a wide variety of social, cultural, historical, political and economic reasons (UNESCO 2004), ranging from partnership models in the UK, North America and Australia (Hagger and McIntyre 2006; Moyles and Stuart 2003) to internships in South Africa and the USA (Darling-Hammond 1990), and in-service training in Malawi and Mexico (Stuart and Tatto 2000).

In England, although the majority of teacher education programmes are university led, with schools working in partnership (Furlong et al. 2006; Hobson et al. 2006), a growing number of teachers now take the Graduate Teacher Programme, which has similarities with internship and in-service models. The first GTPs were established in England in 1998, in order to address a national shortage of teachers by attracting mature entrants to the profession, particularly in areas of high deprivation. The scheme enables schools to employ unqualified teachers and provide a paid internship, usually over one year. Programmes are run by a range of providers, including local authorities (LAs), universities and school consortia, catering for anything between 15 and 200 pre-service teachers (Ofsted 2007).

Entrants via the Graduate Teacher Programme have predominantly been either career changers or those already working in education in other roles, such as teaching assistants; this article will focus on career changers, some of whom have previously worked in educational settings. Although specification of a minimum age is no longer permissible because of age discrimination legislation and a growing number are now entering GTPs in secondary shortage subjects straight from university, most of those starting on the GTP are over 24 (the previously specified minimum age) and the average age of entry is mid-30s. All entrants have to have a first degree, which has either been obtained by applicants ten or more years previously or, in the case of

many teaching assistants, achieved through access courses, part-time or foundation degrees immediately prior to entering the GTP. Whereas traditional initial teacher education usually moves pre-service teachers from theoretical inputs to practice (Kelly 2006), the Graduate Teacher Programme foregrounds practice, with a lesser amount of theory provided in central, often university-based, sessions or within school; the extent, timing and venue vary across GTPs. Most pre-service teachers spend four of five days a week in school from the start of their programme for the whole year, with a shorter period of about six weeks spent in a second school. Thus, the school as the main context for teachers' learning and development is vital from the start (cf. Berliner 2001; Lave and Wenger 1991). The GTP year will be referred to throughout as the internship, to distinguish it from a traditional school placement or practicum.

A growing body of research into the Graduate Teacher Programme (e.g. Brookes 2005; Foster and Bird 2006; Griffiths 2007), as well as national inspection reports (Ofsted 2007), indicate considerable variation in the quality of central provision, internship and school support, although this has improved substantially over the last few years. These and other studies (Bird and Foster 2005; Bricheno, Hopper and Younger 2006) also found that the scheme attracts highly committed and professional candidates, often with extensive skills and experience from previous work, who make the most of development opportunities and make good progress in teaching. However, progress is closely related to the quality of the school-based internship and some studies indicate that teachers fail to achieve their potential as a result, particularly in secondary schools (Dunne 2005; Smith and McLay 2007; Ofsted 2007). So far there is little evidence about how teachers who enter teaching via this

route develop in their subsequent teaching careers, a gap which this research begins to address.

This study focuses on teachers who entered teaching via four well-established Graduate Teacher Programmes in the south of England, offering primary and secondary provision: three led by a university and the fourth by a local authority. All four programmes have been accredited by the Training and Development Agency following recent inspections (Ofsted 2007). The programmes offered by the providers differ somewhat in nature; for example, although all providers offer some central training, this differs in content, length and frequency and, in one programme, attendance by pre-service teachers was optional at the time of the research. Variations between the schools that employed the teachers were also reported. Although the research did not look in detail at differences between the models and content provided by the four programmes, early internship experiences emerged in individual teachers' accounts as important to their subsequent development, as we shall see.

Before turning to the teachers themselves, it is important to consider previous findings on mature career changers entering teaching, as well as models of teachers' professional development and learning, which will be used as a conceptual and theoretical framework for data analysis.

**Mature career changers**

As the GTP has primarily been aimed at mature entrants to teaching, studies of career change teachers are particularly relevant to this study. Priyardharshini and Robinson (2003) identify six main types of career changer entering teaching: young career changer, successful careerist, serial careerist, freelancer, late starter and parent, which are useful distinctions in relation to this study. Multiple reasons for deciding to

change career to enter teaching are highlighted in other studies (e.g. Anthony and Ord 2008; Williams and Forgasz 2009), including dissatisfaction with current career paths, positive motivation to teach and the perceived family-friendliness of teaching: that is, a mixture of intrinsic motivation and pragmatic reasons. Mature entrants bring a range of life and work experiences to teaching, with a variety of skills and personal qualities and applied subject knowledge (Kaldi 2009; Williams and Forgasz 2009; Griffiths 2002). Those already working in the educational sphere or other work with children and young people also bring relevant professional practice (Andersson and Hellberg 2008). These findings have been confirmed in relation to mature entrants to teaching via the GTP (Griffiths 2007; Foster and Bird 2006).

**Developmental stages and contexts for learning**

The developmental stages that teachers go through have often been represented as the move from novice to expert. For example, Fuller's influential study of beginning teachers in the USA (1970) identifies six stages of development, from an early emphasis on the self, through concerns about relationships and class control, moving into a greater emphasis on pupils' learning as teachers' confidence grew. Furlong and Maynard (1995) highlight similar stages of development among primary trainee teachers in the UK. Their study also emphasises the important role of the school-based mentor in helping to move beginning teachers through these stages. In these and similar models, such as Berliner (1994), expertise is not considered achievable for at least seven years.

Stages of development are incorporated into career cycle models of teacher development (e.g. Fessler and Christensen 1992; Kelchtermans 1993); these also stress the importance of personal biography and the interaction with contextual and

social factors. Socio-cultural theorists, such as Lave and Wenger (1991 and Berliner (1991), argue that teachers' developing expertise is embedded in the social practices and discourse of the school contexts in which they are working. They stress the collective nature of professional learning, which is actively constructed and re-constructed with other teachers and students. Kelly (2006, 510) describes this 'knowing-in-practice' as a 'dynamic process resulting from the collaborative actions of teachers and students together in the context of their own work.' Studies of work-based learning (e.g. Fuller et al. 2007; Eraut 2004) are also useful to help identify forms of professional learning and key factors affecting the progress of early career teachers in different contexts.

Drawing on these, the conceptual tool used for analysis here is a model of professional learning (see Fig. 1) developed in recent research on beginning primary teachers (Jacklin, Griffiths and Robinson 2006). As in previous models, stages of development from novice to expert are identified, but this model enables differential progress within teaching and other professional areas to be mapped separately. A cyclical element is also involved (see curved arrows pointing upwards), in order to acknowledge where teachers return to earlier stages because of new personal or contextual circumstances, such as a career break or change of school or class. In addition, the model is useful as a way of tracking progress over time and enables comparisons between teachers to be made. It has already proved a valuable tool when analysing the early career experiences of teachers who undertook traditional teacher education programmes and is especially useful when looking at mature career changers entering teaching through the Graduate Teacher Programme.


Insert Fig.1 about here.

**Methodology**

The focus for the enquiry is the early professional development of GTP-trained teachers, based on the teachers' perspectives. A case study approach (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007; Stake 2003) was adopted in order to identify the distinctive nature of early career teachers' experiences, as well as patterns of professional development. Mixed methods were used (Stark & Torrance 2005), with intensive, 'condensed fieldwork' (Walker 1993) because of time constraints.

Two main methods of data collection were used: questionnaires and interviews. Firstly, a questionnaire was sent via the four GTP providers to 311 GTP-trained primary and secondary teachers in their first to third years of teaching. These explored the teachers' school experiences, areas of development, types of support and any problems faced. However, lack of direct access to respondents because of data protection was problematic (see Stark and Torrance 2005 for difficulties of questionnaire access) and many of the questionnaires were not sent out. This led to a disappointingly low response rate, varying from 10%-30% across providers (45 respondents: 34 women, 11 men), which may also be explained by the timing of the questionnaires: the summer term, which is particularly busy for teachers because of exams and reports. Nevertheless, the questionnaires yielded very useful quantitative and qualitative findings which formed the basis of the follow up interviews. Over half (56%) of the questionnaire sample (25 teachers: 20 women, five men) expressed willingness to be interviewed.

Secondly, in-depth interviews were carried out with a purposive sample (Stake 2003) of nine respondents (eight women, one man; 20% of questionnaire sample), representing a range of gender, age, prior experience, number of years' teaching

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experience, phase and type of school, subject and GTP provider. These explored the same areas in greater depth, particularly key influences on learning, and followed up any individual issues arising from the questionnaires. Telephone interviews were chosen because of convenience (teachers are usually too busy during the day) and relative ease of access across a wide geographical area (cited as advantages by Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007; Scott and Morrison 2006); they were carried out in the early evenings at a time agreed by interviewees and generally lasted 40-45 minutes. Although visual cues are lacking with telephone interviews, researchers point out many benefits, including their usefulness in collecting personal or sensitive data because of relative anonymity and reduction of interviewer effects (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007; Scott and Morrison 2006). Some difficulties were experienced in contacting prospective male interviewees, (it was hoped to interview at least one more), compared to female interviewees who tended to be more available in the evenings, an interesting gender issue in itself. All those interviewed gave generously of their time, were interested in the research and enthusiastic when talking about their teaching. The interview material forms the main basis of the case studies, with questionnaire data also referred to as a wider reference point and triangulation method (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007; Stake 1995); the questionnaire data will be shown in percentage form, while other interview data not used for the case studies here will also be drawn on.

Care was taken to avoid bias, as I had been directly involved in two of the GTPs as a tutor some years before; for example, although I only knew one of the interviewees, I did not select them as a case study teacher. Respondent validation (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007; Stake 1995) was also used; this is particularly important where the emphasis is on interview data (Stark and Torrance 2005). During

the interviews, which were recorded through full, thorough note-taking, particular words and phrases were checked at the time to ensure accuracy. Afterwards, complete transcripts of the interviews were sent to interviewees, if they wanted (three chose to do so), for further verification. Ethical procedures were followed, including obtaining informed consent for the use of interview data. In addition, two colleagues who were not involved in the research read and commented on drafts of the paper and attention was paid to self-reflexivity in the data analysis process (Stark and Torrance 2005). Data analysis was based on identification of categories and themes from the questionnaires initially and these were refined by analysis of the interviews (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007).

From the interviews, four illustrative case studies are discussed in detail here which represent a range of age, gender, phase, provider, schools, years of teaching and patterns of pre- and post-internship experience: Frances (aged 41-50), a former accountant and head of mathematics in a middle school with over three year's experience; Sue (aged 31-40), a secondary languages specialist with two years' teaching experience; Mark (aged 31-40), an English specialist in his first year of teaching at an independent school; and Tricia (aged 20-30), a primary teacher with one year's experience who had previously worked in advertising. Names and some personal details have been changed to protect their anonymity.

**From survival to coping: prior experience and determination**

Looking back at the GTP internship year itself, a number of striking findings can be found in the questionnaire and interview data, strongly expressed by respondents. Most of the teachers found their internship a tough and intensive experience, although for those who had prior experience in teaching, the transition into the GTP was

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sometimes smoother. The interviewees talked unprompted about the kind of person most likely to be successful on the GTP - determined and independent - and compared their progress favourably to those on traditional teacher education routes. Let us start by looking at the beginning teachers' prior experience.

The ability to transfer existing skills to a new context, which is vital for work-based learning (Fuller et al. 2007; Eraut 2004), may be particularly important for pre-service teachers on an employment-based route. Previous studies of the GTP (Brookes 2005; Foster and Bird 2006) found that the older starting age and prior experience of most GTP-trained beginning teachers gave them a head start in teaching and this was reinforced by the current study. All but two of the teachers in the sample (95%) had previous work experience, which was quite varied and in some cases quite extensive, as opposed to only 56% of a larger sample of beginning teachers from traditional routes (Griffiths, Jacklin and Robinson 2002). Several of the interviewees mentioned the value of this in their teaching: for example, Frances regarded her previous accountancy work as good preparation for teaching mathematics. Frances was a 'successful careerist' (Priyardharshini and Robinson 2003); she and the other case study teachers had strong subject knowledge, applied in different work contexts.

Nearly half the total respondents (42%) had worked with children and young people or in teaching-related work prior to the GTP (often a requirement for entry), and this provided particularly useful experience (as in Kaldi 2009; Andersson and Hellberg 2008; Beijaard 1995). For example, both Sue and Mark were 'freelancers' (Priyardharshini and Robinson 2003) who had done a range of work including some teaching overseas before starting the GTP. Mark considered this a useful starting point: 'I knew how to stand in front of a class, what I needed to do.' Three of the four case study teachers had planned progression into teaching, rather than changing

straight from unrelated careers (see also Griffiths 2007). For instance, Tricia was a 'young career changer' (Priyardharshini and Robinson 2003) who, after working in advertising, became a teaching assistant (TA) as a planned preparation for teaching, which she felt had given her valuable insights as well as practical experience: 'I acclimatised so much quicker' (than those not coming through a TA route). In contrast, Frances moved into teaching when she became a parent with no prior teaching-related experience, which may partly explain her early problems during the GTP year; Kelly (2006) has stressed the difficulty of transferring skills from one context to another.

For some teachers, transition into the internship year, at least in retrospect, was smooth and relatively easy. For example, Tricia, who took a local authority-based GTP with some university-led sessions, said:

> I learned well on the GTP - four days in school, one day for the theory at university - it was all so perfect for me...I felt like a proper member of staff last year...The school never treated me like a student and I never felt like a student.

Tricia's description of herself as 'like a proper member of staff' was echoed by other interviewees (as in Foster and Bird 2006); in her and Sue's case, school internship experience confirmed a teacher identity early on whilst central training sessions took the form of 'theorising practice' (Andersson and Hellberg 2008, 8), rather than theory coming before practice as on many traditional routes (Kelly 2006).

However, prior experience per se, particularly if unrelated to schools, did not prevent the internship year being a tough experience for some of the teachers. For instance, Frances described her internship in a middle school vividly:

> The day I started the course, the Maths teacher was seconded to another middle school and I was left to take the class. It was good for me - **very** hard work [her emphasis], with three young

children. It was fantastic in an intense way. I feel I was contributing to school, not as an add on extra. I felt that I couldn't go off sick.  I had a full teaching timetable...I had to get on with it, sink or swim. Luckily I swam - others might not have.

Frances had trained three years earlier on the first year of a university-based GTP with no central training at that stage and little external support. Although she was supposed to be supernumerary (i.e. an additional member of staff), the secondment of her co-teacher left her in the position of class teacher from the start. The mixed feelings with which she regarded this experience are well captured in 'It was fantastic in an intense way,' but there is also a strong sense of obligation and determination in phrases like, 'I had to get on with it,' as well as an inkling of the difficulties of juggling family responsibilities with the very full role of a teacher. Frances's lack of prior school experience was coupled with insufficient school or external support. The importance of being supernumerary on a GTP and receiving adequate support is stressed in a number of studies (Bricheno, Hopper and Younger 2006; Foster and Bird 2006; Dunne 2005). Frances's unsatisfactory situation is now fortunately a rare one, but GTP providers need to monitor schools closely to ensure that trainees are not used to fill a staffing gap.

Looking back on their internship year, all the teachers interviewed stressed the need to be a particular kind of person to survive the GTP and succeed: proactive, determined and independent (as found in Ofsted 2007; Bird and Foster 2005).  As Tricia put it, 'You had to be tough.' This was an unlooked-for finding, as I did not ask the teachers directly about the sort of person they thought was most suitable for the GTP or for teaching. For example, the need to be self-sufficient and independent was stressed by Sue, as was the idea that the GTP was not for everyone, (also hinted at by Frances), and the mixture of challenge and enjoyment:

I was thrown in the deep end - I love it!...I do think you need to be proactive to do the GTP. I've known graduates - it depends on the personality type if I would recommend the GTP....It made us [she and a GTP peer] very proactive, strong. We didn't have time for things to become major disasters. If there was a problem, we had to sort it. We did very well.

Another unexpected finding is that six of those interviewed, including all four case study teachers, spontaneously compared their self-identity on the internship year favourably to those taking traditional undergraduate (BA or BEd) or postgraduate (PGCE) programmes. For instance, Mark said of himself, 'I think I projected a certain confidence compared to other students.' Tricia also compared herself with a PGCE student in the same school: 'She's not as ready as I was to go into the classroom - no way...Even at the end of the teaching practice, she was nowhere near where I was at the end of last year.'

This sense of readiness and self-confidence was not just due to personal attributes but also, crucially, because of contextual factors in the school (see also Bricheno, Hopper and Younger 2006; Smith and McLay 2007). For example, Mark explained: 'SMT [senior management team] integrated me into the school, treating me as any other teacher,' which was very similar to Tricia's earlier comment, 'The school never treated me like a student'. Likewise, Frances emphasised, 'You're accepted as a full member of staff - more than NQTs'; her comparison was with newly qualified teachers trained on other routes. Sue expressed a similar view in terms of differential types of support: 'GTPs need to be proactive practitioners from the start of the year....PGCEs are very supported, very led.' Sue stressed the autonomy that pre-service GTP teachers had from the start, with the implication that they were not directly supported but had to fend for themselves, as GTP studies such as Dunne (2005) have found. However, this was not borne out by the overall findings, where 74% of the questionnaire sample cited strong support from colleagues during

internship, and all the case study teachers provided evidence about the mentoring and support they received, as we shall see more fully in the next section. In Sue's case, she went on to explain that support was certainly available, but was handled sensitively so as not to undermine the beginning teacher's authority in front of the pupils:

> The school gives very good support ...The GTPs are assigned classes though supernumerary. We had support but our own classes - we had to plan. If there were problems, there were different people to go to. If there were problems with the management of classes, we were always seen as the class teacher. Even if a senior teacher came in, they positioned me as the class teacher. If they offered support, it wouldn't be done in front of the students. We were in charge.

Tricia expressed a similar balance of autonomy and support from teachers: 'They rarely said, 'We'll leave you to it', but they kept a distance. It was a very good balance - supportive and distanced.' Sue's and Tricia's accounts relate particularly to the status and position of pre-service GTP teachers, how they were perceived and treated by the teachers compared to PGCE students, and how they then perceived themselves - as 'full' or 'proper' members of staff, as Frances and Tricia put it - which is particularly important for the identity of beginning teachers (Hobson et al 2006; Beijaard 1995). Although their main emphasis was survival in the classroom, they were also gaining confidence in the wider professional demands of teaching (see Fig.1).

We can already see that the beginning teachers' prior experience was useful to their GTP internship, but more effective if this had been related to schools or teaching. In addition, the quality of the school experience and interaction with experienced teachers are already emerging as important factors (as in Berliner 2001; Lave and Wenger 1991). Of the four case study teachers, Frances had by far the toughest internship year because of a combined lack of these factors. In the next

section, we will look at how the teachers developed during their induction year as a newly qualified teacher (NQT), the types of support they had and ways that they learnt professionally from other teachers.

**From coping to exploring: easy inductions, support and learning from others**

In terms of the model of professional development (Fig.1), all the case study teachers had reached at least the coping stage in teaching and wider professional aspects by the start of their NQT year and, in their own perception, were ahead of their traditionally-trained peers and more likely to identify themselves as a teacher (as in Foster and Bird 2006). This is also borne out by comparing the accounts of beginning teachers from traditional teacher education routes (Hobson et al. 2006, Jacklin, Griffiths and Robinson 2006), who felt less well prepared for their induction year, were often barely surviving and did not usually see themselves as teachers until much later.

Nearly three quarters of the teachers in the overall sample (73%) cited the school-based nature of the internship, including observing teachers and responsibility for classes, as particularly advantageous. Three of the four case study teachers described their induction year as easy, if not easier than their internship year, because of this. For example, Tricia put her smooth transition into the induction year down to the intensive in-school nature of the GTP, the 'continuity if you stay in the same school', which all the case study teachers had done, and the responsibility she had had, as she explained:

> I was used to **managing** a class [her emphasis], not just teaching....Silly little things, like doing the register and playtime. Even though you're regularly, always with another teacher, **you** deal with it...So much, a lot of teaching is managing all the other things, like visitors....assemblies, evenings, productions. You see the whole cycle through, rather than be there and finish in a few weeks. It's very different.

Tricia stressed that, although she had been working alongside another teacher in her internship year, she had to deal with things as they arose. By the start of her induction year, Tricia was already coping well with the wider professional demands of teaching (Fig.1) as well as able to take on the responsibility of running a class and felt, 'I know the school inside and out.' Similarly, Sue stressed that:

> My NQT [newly qualified teacher] year wasn't the same as a 'normal' NQT year. Class management was established. I was working in teams. I already planned schemes of work, I already had my own classes. I had established working relations with staff - very good development in my NQT year.

Like Tricia, Sue could enumerate the professional aspects such as planning and class management that she was already experienced in before she started her induction year, enabling her to set out from a confident, coping position, embedded in the school community (cf. Lave and Wenger 1991).

Mark's experiences were more extreme, as he was in a boarding school and therefore even more fully integrated into school life, as he explained:

> It's different in a boarding environment. I'm a House tutor, academic tutor to several individual pupils in the House. I do at least one night duty per week, then I'm the person in charge in that House. I see tutorial pupils at least once a week through to A level.

In his induction year, Mark was taking on considerable pastoral responsibilities on top of the areas that Tricia and Sue had identified, within a twenty four hour school environment, which gave him many new challenges. Because of these, he emphasised the importance of building good relationships with the non-academic staff - 'ground staff, secretarial staff, dining hall staff, matrons' - as much as with other teaching staff, stressing that, 'Community life is very warm and supportive'. The wider

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professional demands of the role took precedence over class teaching (Fig.1) and made for a very challenging induction year for Mark.

What all those interviewed underlined was the continuity of the GTP internship which impacted on their NQT experiences: being in school all or nearly all the year and seeing the 'whole cycle', as Tricia put it, of the school year. Tricia's earlier comment, 'I was used to managing a class', and Mark's, 'I'm the person in charge' were similar to Sue's statement, quoted earlier, 'We were in charge': the teachers had a strong sense of confidence and self-agency for those early in their careers (see also Jacklin, Griffiths and Robinson 2006; Berliner 2001) and were moving quickly to full participation in the life of the school (cf. Lave and Wenger 1991).

A major factor in the teachers' early professional development was the support from other staff, particularly mentors, and the way that they learnt from experienced teachers (as in Berliner 2001; Lave and Wenger 1991). The importance of the mentor's role has been highlighted in many studies of initial teacher education (e.g. Edwards and Collison 1996; Yeomans and Sampson 1994), but is arguably particularly important in the GTP, where there is little or no training outside the school (see Brookes 2005; Dunne 2005; Ofsted 2007). In this study, the influence and support of mentors and other colleagues in school, including senior teachers, was cited by 64% and 74% of the questionnaire sample respectively and the interviews revealed in more detail how this took place. For example, Frances described her GTP mentor as her most important influence:

> He was a tremendous man. He had 30 plus years' experience. My children went through school with him as a teacher. I felt quite honoured. He tucked me under his wing, luckily decided I was OK and left his mark.

Frances's description suggested that she was rather in awe of her mentor because of his wealth of experience and that it may have been a somewhat unequal, protective relationship, though clearly influential (as in Lave and Wenger's 'oldtimers' 1991). In Mark's case, his mentor also took the initiative in advising and initiating the new teacher, but in what sounds like a more inclusive way:

> He was very proactive: I wouldn't have to go and ask him. He'd say, 'We need to do this' or 'It's time for your next observation.' He's very fair. He went to great lengths to include me in the department. I valued this and other members of the department were the same. He suggested new courses, new topics to continue my professional development. He's also very friendly and accessible.

Both Frances and Mark had the same mentor in their internship and induction years, which gave added continuity. Approachability on the mentor's part was vital, as was the ability on the beginning teacher's part to seek and take advice; open, constructive dialogue was an important learning factor, as Tricia explained about her induction mentor:

> She's very approachable, lovely. If I have any silly questions, I can go to her and she'll explain. I had an issue about behaviour management near the start. She sat down and prepped me, gave examples. She's busy as Deputy Head but always finds time. She's always very constructive in her observations, always positive. The Head's the same - I never feel put down. She gives loads of positives and her targets are always tangible.

Sue also learnt much about behaviour management by observing and working alongside experienced teachers as part of her induction programme, and regarded this as a 'strong advantage'; likewise, Frances gained much from the behaviour support team in her school, who would sit in on lessons and give valuable advice. These accounts match closely Kelly's 'collaborative problem solving' (2006, 509) and Fuller

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et al.'s description of 'collective, co-constructed knowledge creation and ability to make 'hot decisions'' (2007, 750) in the workplace.

Whereas behaviour management has been cited as a strength of many GTP-trained teachers (Ofsted 2007), subject knowledge has been identified as a weakness, particularly among secondary specialists (Dunne 2005; Smith and McLay 2006) because of the lack of subject inputs compared to traditional routes. However, it is important to make a distinction here between subject knowledge and subject pedagogy. All four case study teachers came into teaching with strong subject knowledge from their first degrees and prior work experience in which they had applied this knowledge – vital prerequisites for this route. They did need to learn about subject pedagogy, which they gained first and foremost from school experience, guided by experienced practitioners (Kelly's 'knowledge-in-practice' 2006, 506), with some 'theorising on practice' (Andersson and Hellberg 2008) - a different emphasis and order from many traditional routes (Kelly 2006).

For example, although Mark admitted that teaching Advanced level English in his second year of teaching would be challenging, he cited particular progress in his subject pedagogy through working with colleagues on planning units of work, such as Shakespeare plays for GCSE. Tricia had taken on responsibility for the school production, which she described as 'a big learning curve - challenging but brilliant.' Likewise, Frances and Sue were both progressing well in their specialist subjects (as we shall see in more detail in the next section) and, by the end of their second year of teaching, had significantly improved the results of national tests and examinations for their classes (Fig.1 teaching skills). Whilst 39% of the questionnaire sample of teachers in this study cited behaviour management as the area in which they had developed most professionally, all the teachers identified one or more aspects of

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subject expertise in which they had progressed and the way in which they learnt from other teachers in 'learning intensive workplaces' (Fuller et al. 2007, 746; see also Berliner 2001).

In both Sue's and Tricia's schools in particular, it was the policy to encourage peer observation, joint planning and whole school collaboration, which research has shown is a valuable source of professional development (Cordingley et al. 2003; Middlewood et al. 2005). The importance of working with experienced practitioners, whether mentors or other colleagues, was a key factor in the GTP-trained teachers' early professional development (as in Bricheno, Hopper and Younger 2006; Smith and McLay 2007), as found with teachers who have come through other routes (Hagger and McIntyre 2006; Jacklin, Griffiths and Robinson 2006) and in other work contexts (Fuller et al. 2007; Eraut 2004). Given the particular importance of these school-based factors for the GTP, the absence of strong mentoring and collegial learning could be a serious impediment to GTP-trained teachers' professional development.

**Towards proficiency and balance: taking responsibility and further professional development**

By the end of their induction year, all the case study teachers had successfully established themselves as coping, competent teachers and were beginning to move into a more exploratory stage in classroom teaching, with a realistic approach to what was involved in terms of wider professional demands and aspirations to progress further (see Fig.1).

Looking at the wider sample of GTP-trained teachers, 58% already held some position of responsibility, such as head of department, subject or year group, by the

end of their first or second years of teaching. Amongst the other 42%, most were already taking on more than just their everyday teaching responsibilities, including running out of school clubs and organising school trips. For instance Tricia, as well as managing the school production, had run a whole school reading week with visiting writers- 'a break from the normal curriculum - lovely to have that freedom' - and was due to take on the role of literacy co-ordinator from the start of her second year. In the residential environment, Mark was developing his pastoral role and work with students with special needs, finding that 'opportunities outside lessons are more effective' to build relationships and run support sessions (see Fig.1 wider professional demands). It could be argued that it was too soon for additional responsibilities; as with internship and induction phases, these teachers still had much to learn from experienced teachers and other experts (as in Berliner 2001).

For example, after two years' experience, Sue was already a languages co-ordinator for key stage 3 (11-14 year-olds) and about to move to another school to become an Advanced Skills Teacher (AST). As well as attending courses, she had also contributed to LA-run courses and she had looked beyond the school to the local advisory service for external validation and support. Sue described how an advisor collected evidence on her progress through observation and video-recording - 'she was able to see my practice developing' - in order to support her AST application, adding: 'As a person I fly proactively and go for it.' She was clearly ambitious but very ready to acknowledge that she had gained ideas and experience from others - 'I actively seek out information and develop over the years' as she put it - regularly 'constructing and reconstructing professional knowledge' (Kelly 2006, 509). She has since won a National Teaching Award.

Working with external experts was found to be a particularly effective form of continuing professional development (CPD) in a recent study by Cordingley et al. (2003). Like Sue, all the teachers in the sample had undertaken some kind of further in-service development since starting to teach, varying from subject-specific courses to wider professional areas, often related to future career plans, as in other workplace contexts. Fuller et al. stress the importance of engaging in 'a broad range of activities, including the acquisition of theoretical concepts, both on and off the job' (2007, 747) in order to broaden what could otherwise be a narrow range of experiences. This was especially important for those from a GTP background, as they had had limited experience of other school contexts and pedagogical approaches.

Mentoring was another form of further development often undertaken early by GTP-trained teachers, particularly if they had stayed in the same school as their internship. For example, Tricia had mentored a PGCE student in her induction year - 'because I'd been there last year and the Head trusted me' - and saw mentoring as an area which she wanted to develop over the next few years. Sue and Frances, who were somewhat more experienced, were already established mentors, who enjoyed supporting other beginning teachers on the GTP, 'to enable them to embrace their potential', as Sue put it. It could be argued, however, that their limited experience might perpetuate too narrow a pedagogy to others, given the importance of the mentoring role. Nevertheless, their growing expertise enabled them to participate more fully in a wider range of roles within the school (see Lave and Wenger 1991).

The most experienced of the case study teachers, Frances, was well established in her school but, unlike Sue, did not have the confidence to move elsewhere. Frances took on the role of head of department at the start of her third year of teaching, when her predecessor (her former mentor) retired. She had found this role 'challenging...but

I love it!' and already had plans to 'be head of a bigger department, to develop and extend as the school enlarges,' which was to happen the following year when the school merged with another local middle school. Frances saw this as the first stage towards a senior management position: 'I want to make more input...I see things happening and want more say,' although she did not see herself as a headteacher or even a deputy head in the future. Increasingly, teachers are choosing to reach a certain stage but not to pursue headship because of the considerable responsibilities involved (see also Jacklin, Griffiths and Robinson 2006). The difficult start and more limited opportunities afforded by her school may also have restricted Frances's aspirations (Fuller et al. 2007).

For all four case study teachers, as for 76% of the sample, the main reward in teaching was working with children and young people and seeing them develop, as Frances, explained:

> It's been brilliant, never looked back for a moment...Extending the children who could pass GCSE in year 7 [11-12 years], helping the ones who could be in a special school get to level 3 - a great achievement. Quite emotionally draining - I look for ways forward.

This combination of positive and negative descriptions also characterised Sue, who was teaching in a school with behavioural difficulties, which she found particularly rewarding: 'Love it!...I try to develop education the only way I can, give young people a chance. It's challenging.' Sue's 'long-suffering' partner often bore the brunt of hearing about a difficult day in school.

'Challenging' was a word which cropped up frequently in all the interviews, and keeping the balance between the rewards and challenges was a difficult one. For Mark, in a boarding school, 'There's a great danger that your social life quickly becomes consumed. I'm already concerned that school work takes over my time.'

Tricia cited issues such as bullying or dealing with difficult parents, but her biggest worry was 'pointless paperwork!...it detracts from actually doing it.' She was already planning to reduce her time to a job share if she started a family. Frances reflected that she could not have entered teaching when her children were very young: 'I'm glad I did it when I did;' they were now old enough to be more self-reliant. Each teacher was finding, or looking for, their balance in different ways according to their personal circumstances (see Fig.1). As Kelly stresses, it is important to take account of 'how teachers' identities in other areas of their lives contribute to and relate to their identities as teachers' (2006, 514; see also Kaldi 2009; Kelchtermans 1993).

**Conclusions**

It was found that, whilst the GTP internship year was generally tough, the induction year for most teachers trained on this route was relatively easy and they identified themselves as teachers from an early stage. An unexpected finding was that the interviewees compared their internship and transition into teaching to those trained on traditional routes and considered themselves better prepared for the rigours of classroom life because of their immersion in school experience. However, although early independence was generally welcomed, too much responsibility too early could be counter-productive, as in Frances's case. The teachers emphasised the need to be proactive and resilient in order to succeed on the GTP (see also Bird and Foster 2005) and the benefits for mature entrants. As Sue put it, 'The GTP was right for my personality - mature people who've worked in the real world.' Prior experience was an important asset, especially if related to teaching; in most GTPs previous school or teaching experience is now a prerequisite.

Personal characteristics alone were not enough to ensure success on the GTP though (cf. Fessler and Christensen 1992); the way that beginning teachers were regarded and treated by schools was a key factor in their developing identity, and support from colleagues and senior management was cited as vital. As in other studies of initial teacher education and workplace learning (e.g. Hagger and McIntyre 2006; Eraut 2004), the teachers' accounts highlighted that they learnt effectively by working alongside more experienced colleagues and that the role of the mentor had been particularly significant in their early development (Lave and Wenger 1991). What comes through clearly in the accounts of the case study teachers is the complex interaction between the individual teacher, their colleagues and students. Knowledge-in-practice gradually combined with knowledge-of-practice (Kelly 2006, 510) in an ongoing process of negotiated and collaborative learning; the particular combination and order of that learning was different from many traditional routes, but not necessarily superior or inferior to them, although there were some potential limitations which are highlighted below.

More than half the teachers in the sample had taken on posts of responsibility within the schools from an early stage and had a clear concept of their career progression. However, as the teachers developed further, the need to achieve balance between their personal and professional lives became more important; pressures of marking, paperwork and other challenges of the job, such as pupil behaviour, needed careful management, and outside influence from courses and advisors could provide further help here. Fuller et al. (2007) stress the importance of access to a wider range of learning experiences than on-the-job training only, and make a useful distinction between 'expansive' and 'restricted' workplace environments (2007, 745). One obvious limitation of the GTP is its restriction to internship in one main school, with a shorter

second school placement, which could easily limit beginning teachers' experience too much as well as perpetuate limited pedagogical practices. Thus changing schools, or at least gaining as much varied experience in and out of the same school, together with further external development opportunities, could be seen as a vital way of broadening horizons and gaining wider expertise.

Arising from these findings, a number of implications for employment-based routes into teaching can be drawn, which would also be relevant to all initial teacher education programmes as well as teacher induction and CPD. Firstly, there is a continuing need, as stressed elsewhere (Bricheno, Hopper and Younger 2006; Ofsted 2007), for pre-service teachers to be supernumerary, in order to avoid excessive strain being placed on them too early. Secondly, the training of initial and induction mentors should be rigorous and appropriate to the needs of the beginning teachers, to ensure that this vital support and development role is adequately fulfilled, particularly where central training is minimal (Brookes 2005; Dunne 2005). Thirdly, whole school support and collaboration, including peer observation and joint planning (as in Cordingley et al. 2003) are important to assist early career teachers' further professional development and learning; the culture of the school as a learning environment is vital if effective professional learning is to take place (Berliner 2001; Kelly 2006). Last but not least, access to a number of varied school experiences and some external development is important in order to increase learning opportunities and avoid reproduction of restricted pedagogical approaches (Fuller et al. 2007).

The model of professional learning in Jacklin, Griffiths and Robinson (2006) has been useful as a conceptual framework for analysing the case study teachers' stages of development in terms of classroom skills and wider professional demands. Socio-cultural theories of learning (Berliner 2001; Kelly 2006; Lave and Wenger

1991) have also been valuable as a way of understanding the particular learning

processes undertaken by the beginning teachers. Further research is now needed to

follow GTP-trained teachers into the middle years of their careers, tracking setbacks

and development as they change jobs and schools.

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**Fig. 1: Model of professional learning (Jacklin, Griffiths and Robinson 2006, p.122)**

| THE ACQUISITION OF TEACHING SKILLS | | MANAGING PROFESSIONAL DEMANDS |
|---|---|---|
| Survival | | Survival |
| ↓ | | ↓ |
| Coping | ↔ | Coping |
| ↓ | | ↓ |
| Exploring | | Realism |
| ↓ | | ↓ |
| Proficiency | | Balance |
| ↓ | | ↓ |

**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**