Title: Professionalism on probation: induction and new teachers in Scotland

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This paper draws on qualitative data produced by ‘teacher-researchers’ in continuous, ‘insider’ contact with new teachers during their induction year 2004-5 in Scotland, as part of an ongoing Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) project on ‘Early Professional Learning’ (EPL). It considers some of the theorisations of professionalism, in particular those currently themed around the fraught tensions and possible fate of teaching, and which highlight the uncertain possibilities for practitioner autonomy in a context of relentless policy initiatives. The new induction arrangements in Scotland provide the focus for such themes in this paper, mainly via the discursive dynamics of a particular new teacher for whom questions about how well he was being inducted also involved questions about what kind of professionalism he was getting into. There are also comparisons with other project case studies. The induction policy is not evaluated here as such, but does provide a key context for a closer consideration of early professionalism, the value of which lies in the details of how it both troubles and comforts policy as well as more general concerns for professionalism. It argued that an irreducible uncertainty is both the problem and the prospect for professional performances, and that policy, even when in several respects well received by practitioners, needs to acknowledge its limitations in relation to such a paradox.

Introduction: dead on arrival?

Geller, a newly qualified teacher, recalled an early experience in a temporary ‘supply’ post prior to his full probationary year:

> When you arrived to take a class for absent teachers you were slow handclapped, booed and hissed. I felt that the pupils did not know me yet (Geller)

It was the frequency of this sort of professionally mortifying incident that the McCrone Report (2000) in Scotland saw as ‘scandalous’ and which subsequently led to new induction arrangements. A key feature was the guarantee of continuous support in full one-year school placements to avoid the lottery of a series of temporary ‘supply’ posts. Geller’s individual experience thus has a direct link to the new induction policy. Without its entitlements, especially continuity, or a strong existing collegial commitment, his novice professionalism seemed to have been pronounced ‘dead on arrival’. At least almost, for his comment that ‘the pupils did not know me yet’, indicates the significance of continuity in his discourse as well as that of official policy. For Geller, this meant time to develop a certain quality of personal relationship to pupils, which he saw as an essential condition for professional development.

This recollected incident raises central concerns for this paper, including how new teachers talk about their induction experiences, how they go about constructing a sense of themselves as professional, and the contexts in which they do so. Underpinning such contexts are the new
induction arrangements, themselves framed within larger policy initiatives to restructure the conditions for teacher professionalism. Geller’s recollection also indicates the paper’s methodological reliance on a particular new teacher’s narrative, through his initial ‘probationary’ year, and into his following one as ‘fully registered’ teacher. His case allows for some detail related to what has already been announced here as key to both induction policy and inductee; time (continuity) and its links with how new teachers engage with a professionalism largely centred on ‘how do I function effectively as a person in class?’ (Richard, new teacher). Geller’s account is taken from an ongoing project on ‘Early Professional Learning’ (EPL), concerning new teachers in their induction year 2004–5. Some theoretical and contextual issues are briefly outlined next, before the focus returns to Geller’s narrative.

Discourses of professionalism: conflicts and uncertainties
As currently theorised, contemporary professionalism in education is seen as conflicted, and as part of the wider debate about what is happening to all groups claiming professional status. Polarities are often invoked, particularly around the value-based ‘inner’ commitments of professionals, and their engagements with the ‘outer’, whether that of the world as theorised through its expertise, or those imposed by political and organisational priorities of others. Between ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ various kinds of tensions are raised. While professional performances necessarily engage with both, at its healthiest it reduces to neither and this irreducible uncertainty is both the problem and the prospect for professional performances.

More pessimistic readings currently depict a reductive trend to various triumphs of ‘outer’ over ‘inner’. Evetts, for example, begins with a contrast between two kinds of professional discourse, ‘organisational’ and ‘occupational’. ‘Organisational professionalism’ based in a growth in professionals as employees under managerial control (Evetts 2005). This is compounded in public sectors, such as education, by relentless ‘direct government intervention (and) ... marketisation’ (Beck and Young 2005: 83). In contrast, an earlier discourse of ‘occupational professionalism’ appeals more to the expertise and value commitments of the professionals themselves, with trust as part of a service-to-client ethic and an autonomy of judgement grounded in collegiality. Key differences between the two discourses are ‘who controls?’ and ‘who benefits?’

For Bernstein (1996), this ‘occupational to organisational’ change signals a necrology of professional life. Its trajectory is from a healthy birth to current imminent death, given that for him the first ever ‘pedagogic sequencing’ was from the establishment by a powerful collegial induction into its defining ‘singular’, the individual’s ‘inner’ professional commitment to expertise. Only then was there an engagement in the outside world, necessary both to the development and use of such expertise. Fraught though it may be, a productive relationship between ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ was essential to professionalism. Others share Bernstein’s fear, that in education such ‘inner’ commitment to expertise is currently seen as dying by a process of politically imposed, institutional and personal ‘self auditing’ whereby the ‘outer has become the inner’ (Beck 1999: 228). This would amount to a sort of professional suicide, leaving only ‘designer teachers’ (Sachs 2001), existing on a meagre regime of audit-size measures, ‘standardized across a large sample, irrespective of place’ (Jeffrey 1999: 56) and whereby ‘the “auditors” can be shown to be “us”’ (Strathern 2000: 290). This would be an odd autonomy, experienced ‘as much about what we do to ourselves as what is done to us’ (Danaher, Shirato and Webb, quoted in Lather 2004 :21). Here lies a well-trodden ground, burial ground even, discursing policy intervention as imposing a ‘curriculum of the dead’ on schools (Ball 1995), and amounting eventually to the ‘strange death’ of professionalism in education itself (Beck 1999).

Of course there are complications. Tensions and self conflict can be located not just between ‘inner and outer’ but within each. Three such ‘inner’ tensions can be briefly raised. First there are doubts about the degree of self-interest within as purely fiduciary claims in ‘occupational’ discourse, with its protection of status and reward. Then there is the challenge for the epistemological health of the ‘inner’, seen as in need of the self-interrogation of a ‘reflective practice’ to explicate the necessary ‘messiness’ of complex professional judgements (Schon 1983). Finally, such turns can come with caveats, as in Hayes’s account of the post-compulsory sector. Here he argues there is a ‘therapeutic turn’ towards a pedagogy for raising learner ‘self-esteem’
rather than any real skills or knowledge. People might feel better about themselves, but there is a
double de-skilling: of learners being positioned outside the new high-skill labour markets, and of
teachers in an ‘epistemological parallel in the shift from knowledge to process’ (2003: 33).

Two tensions also inhabiting the ‘outer’ can be briefly rehearsed. Evetts claims that increased
organisational control seeks both to suppress while invoking the professional commitments of
occupational discourse, but only to serve managerially controlled aims. She sees inherent conflict
here and asks: ‘do complex systems of accountability and audit themselves damage trust?’ (2005:
15). Yet given that an organisation’s market advantage may increasingly depend on its creative
‘edge’ in the new knowledge economy, Avis raises both ethical and epistemic possibilities for a
revived ‘expansive professionalism’ requiring collective problem-solving and a strengthening of

Teacher professionalism: a dance of death?
Such accounts propose conflicted and uncertain trajectories for the fate of professionalism. In
practice, the ideal types of ‘occupational’ and ‘organisational’ cohabit in sometimes incompatible,
even paradoxical ways. Educational has variously depicted teachers as ‘composite professionals’
(Troman 1996: 285), increasingly ‘happy to embrace the role of teacher, but want(ing) to shrug off
the identity’ (Maclure, 1993:318, original emphasis). The ‘inner’ may be riven, but if this is a dance
of death, it seems a lively one, performed in an “arena” ... of drama and struggle’ (Bernstein and
Solomon 1999: 269). There is much ‘hopping between discourses’ (Jeffrey 1999: 58) or at least
‘straddling the line between them’ (Silcock 2002: 149) with only one foot in the grave. Silcock a lso
suggests that:

speculating about the demise of professionalism for principled reasons is to forget that
teaching thrives on (and must thrive) as a largely pragmatic business ... This doesn’t alter ( teachers’) belief that it matters who decides if changes are worthwhile or not (Silcock op.cit:
150)

Such a mix of ‘pragmatism’ and principle might apply also to teacher engagements with policy
initiatives. For example, a key aim of the 2001 Scottish Executive (the aforementioned ‘McCrone’)
was that the ‘prevailing culture of hierarchy and compliance (in schools) is to give way to a culture
of collegiality’ (MacDonald 2004: 414). This is policy seeing itself not just as midwife but parent to
teacher professionalism. Yet she argued that the pragmatic-principled response of teachers in her
case-study reflected policy tensions beyond McCrone, and ‘the irreconcilable conflict between a
discourse of “delivery” and the ideal of collegiality’ (ibid 432).

A study by some members of the EPL team also related to the discursive dynamics between what
the foregoing has variously presented as ideal types, pragmatics, principles, fantasies, beliefs,
ideals and power. It focused on the implementation of national policy initiatives by teachers and
nurses, and argued that in such a crowded discursive context:

the professional self currently mobilises discrepant identities that raise it as a problem for itself
(Stronach et al 2002: 2)

This study proposed a view of the professional as caught between different discourses, offering
possibilities for various kinds of complex and inflected movements. In the event, it saw its data as
resisting a simple morality tale of (‘outer’ organisational) ‘imposed policy as bad’ and (‘inner’
occupational) ‘collegial practice as good’. Teachers’ discourse about how they engaged with the
imposition of policy (a national numeracy initiative) drew on both what the study termed a register
of ‘ecologies of practice’, such as ‘inner’ collegial and personal commitment to pupil learning) at the
same time as these were troubled by ‘an economy of performance’ register which prioritising
learning as externally audited, quantified outcomes.

Methodology: ‘feeling for the pulse’?
The methodological focus of this 2002 study was on four ways of complicating the notion of
professionalism, all of which might also be related to new teachers. The first accepts there are
‘irresolvably ambiguous’ aspects of teacher role. For example, the teacher role demands a high
degree of both personal investment as well as disengagement. When, where and how to manage
this is an especially pronounced issue for new teachers. Geller’s comment that ‘the pupils do not know me yet’ was both a response to what had hurt him as a person and stopped him doing his job. The problem was to find ways to be and not to be himself, a shock introduction to St. Pierre’s question: ‘what part of myself must I maintain in order to subvert myself?’ (1997: 365). The second way concerns boundaries rather than role, what can be fuelled or depleted in the transactions between ‘inner’ and ‘outer’. With new teachers such as Geller, it might be asked whether and how such policies (induction and others), as well as collegial supports, might fuel or deplete his professionalism.

The third way concerns time, and how narratives of professional self, linking past, present and future, are constructed by new teachers: ‘the pupils do not know me yet’. Given the various discourses available, and the variations in power involved in each, the fourth complication considered ‘what is possible and not possible to say about contemporary professionalism’. What kinds of professionalism can be spoken of and engaged with? And rather than look for finalities of death or triumphant resolution, the epistemological emphasis was to consider via such four aspects whether professionalism might at least ‘operate in a pulse-like way’ (Stronach et al 2002:13).

This present paper accepts another kind of ‘pulse’, between what each new teacher has to ‘personally confront’ yet which is also displayed as ‘shared persistent dilemmas, contradictory realities and common narratives’ (Britzman 2003). Given this, it was thought important to obtain qualitative data from probationary teachers engaging with the new induction policy in Scotland. Overall, it sought to capture something of the individuality and possible commonalities of these stories. Further, its style of data gathering was distinctive in how it did so. It used six ‘teacher-researchers’ for interviews and observations, each located in their own schools and working with three to five ‘probationers’ (2004-5). They were ‘ethnographers’ in a special sense that they were (a) ‘natives’ and were seen as such, yet (b) came to be seen as partly detached from both school and formal induction process because of their special role. This gave them in Foucauldian terms a kind of disciplinary detachment that increased the confessional element in new teachers’ talk with them, while (c) their constant presence in the school gave them insights and access to its informal registers and ‘ecologies’. Further, (e) they worked with experienced ethnographic researchers, so the quality of their access could be linked to methodological and theoretical expertise in relation to data analysis and interpretation. Some details of the official induction arrangements are now offered.

Context: the formal induction policies
In Scotland, given a ‘complex history of neglect’, the need for new induction provision is clear from McNally’s analysis and the McCrone Report’s judgement of ‘quite inadequate support’ (McNally 2002: 150). Its two main elements were a set of arrangements and a document specification (The Standard for Full Registration - the SFR). These were introduced in August 2002, and aimed especially to standardise the 96 ‘expected features (competences)’ of new professionals, and how these were to be assessed during and at the end of a full year. They are organised into three inter-related categories, the familiar trio of ‘knowledge and understanding’, ‘skills and abilities’ and ‘values and personal commitment’ and their satisfactory acquisition is essential to employment. The SFR offers ‘illustrations’ of the competences, while the arrangements guaranteed entitlements to support their development which include:

- a one-year school placement for continuity
- a designated induction supporter (or mentor)
- CPD (continuing professional development sessions offered by LEA)
- 0.3 protected non-class contact time for CPD
- regular assessed observation sessions, plus opportunities to observe others
- termly reviews informed by the SFR
- Interim and Final profiles as evidence for full registration

The policy concerns are therefore also with role (the illustrations of competences), time, boundary (as enhancing professionalism) and is intended to improve how professionalism may be
recognised and discoursed. Though its emphasis is a cognitive one of ‘knowing that, knowing how
and knowing why’, with heavy reliance on illustrations of competence to underpin assessment, the
SFR is discursively mixed. It does not simply oppose ‘inner and outer’ whereby ‘self-formation
contrasts with .... recommended induction policy’. (Tickle 2000: 100). So it includes two kinds of
process. The first relates to time, with three timelines: professionalism itself involves ‘life-long
learning'; the probationary year lasts one year; the competences may need up to five years fully to
acquire (GTCS 2002). The second process invokes one of the ‘irresolvably ambiguous’ aspects of
role, highlighted as inner-directed activities such as ‘effective self-evaluation’ and ‘reflective
practice’. For example, the teacher as someone ‘sensitive to the impact of their personal style of
communication on pupils’.5

Some anticipated issues and early findings about new induction arrangements
The need for better support for new teachers is generally acknowledged, though reasons differ.
Policy-makers in both England and Scotland have concerns about teacher retention and public
spending, school managers about resources and local control, and new teachers about continuity
and support. The concerns of those in teacher preparation Institutions of Higher Education (IHE)
sector in Scotland displayed discursive contrasts similar to those outlined above: was the new
policy ‘procedure-driven’ or ‘person-centred’ (Rippon and Martin 2003); was it a ‘standards-based
discourse’ at the expense the more ‘holistic’ practitioner notions, did it overemphasise formal over
informal processes as well as continuity over ‘radical contextual differences between teaching as a
student and as a “real” teacher’ (McNally 2002: 159)? These concerns were themed around too
much ‘outer’ imposition over the ‘inner’ engagements seen as essential to ‘occupational
professionalism.

While these were anticipated concerns in Scotland, a similar package of measures had already
been introduced in England in 1999 on similar grounds. Initial studies of newly qualifies teachers
(NQTs) suggested the Scottish concerns were not unfounded. Analyses argued that the overall
impact was ‘likely to encourage an ‘instrumental' model of teaching, unresponsive to the ‘individual
professional needs’ of NQTs (Heaney 2001: 253). Several studies also pointed to the importance
of an ‘institutional ethos' conducive to supportive dialogue (Jones 2002: 523) and enabling the
‘most highly valued induction activity' of informal discussion (Williams 2003: 212). This ‘collaborative ethos' also provided a favourable context for the ‘personal stories and coping
strategies' seen as crucial to a reflective use of the induction model (Harrison 2002). In fact by
2004, a major systematic review of research on the new induction policy in England found little
evidence for ‘a definitive model of induction’ and pointed to the limitations of ‘central government
frameworks' compared with importance of 'local circumstances' and ‘flexibility, sensitivity to context
and imagination' (Totterdell et al 2004: 38).

If one ‘definitive model' was not the answer, nor was just leaving things as they were. For
some new teachers too much could still depend on ‘being in a “good school” or “bad school”
(Jones et al 2002: 507; Kyriacou and O'Connor, 2003). The concerns here are not just about
the new induction procedures themselves but the internal cultural and management issues in
the school in which they have to be embedded. In turn, such ecological facets relate the
school’s locality. Certainly problems of teacher attrition are greater in schools faced by
‘challenging' factors, especially in larger urban areas. 6 Such schools tend to have problems
attracting new teachers and can be seen as potential graveyards for novice professionalism,
and yet such schools can make extra efforts to support and retain novices. So while no-one
appeared to dispute the value of more resources and a raised profile for early professional
learning, the research also suggests this cannot be centrally prescribed: rather that what
happens in context is crucial to early professional induction. It is from particular stories that
we might engage with the ‘struggle’ or ‘pulse’ between the claims of discourses of
professionalism such as the organizational and occupational. In the light of this, some of the
data from the research conducted by the EPL teacher-researcher team is next considered.

Geller’s probationary year: professionalism and ‘real education’ in the ‘exam factory’
One reason for using in situ teacher-researchers is that they were able to collect data on a regular
basis, alert to the particular rhythms of activity in their schools, the key points of the induction
process and significant moments for individual probationers. While still episodic, such regular contact did enable something of a personal narrative to be built up, whose movements are lost only as selected fragments for comparison across other narratives. Here that kind of contact is used to catch something of Geller’s ‘road to becoming’ (Britzman 2003), and to look more closely at how some of these considerations are played out in a particular case. The analysis draws especially on ways of focusing referred to above: about the ambiguities of role (what it is to be a teacher); about boundaries (what expands or confines the role); the importance of time and what kinds of professional life survives or is mourned.

Geller is a language teacher who, on a pre-probationary short-term supply post, was forewarned that it was likely to be ‘a rollercoaster’ ride. Indeed it started with the ‘awful’ mortification already quoted. In his subsequent school, revived now in a new context and with full probationary status, he begins to engage with an ‘irresolvably ambiguous’ issue for the professional role – its relationship to his personal style:

I’ve got a shared S1 class ... the teaching styles are completely different ...but they’ll realise when they’re in my class they’ll do things my way... Some of them said ‘but we like you Sir, why can’t we have you all the time?’ Maybe I’m doing something right after all! (Geller, September)

Later in the same month, cloned into the curricular scheme of an unsympathetic Head of Department, his relationship with a powerful colleague is experienced as a greater threat to his attempt to breathe life into his novitiate professionalism:

I feel like I’m in a pool of water and one day I will break the surface and be able to breathe more easily (Geller, September)

But by October, despite some resuscitation in one context (‘I feel a lot more confident in the classrooms now’), his professionalism still needs more oxygen:

I feel as if I’m not really been treated as a proper member of staff. I feel like an extra ... just the probationer and I just have my classes to worry about but I would much rather get involved in the school and have a say (Geller, October)

An ‘occupational professionalism’ nurtured by collegial ‘ecologies of practice’ cannot be assumed.

Later in the same month, he uses his formal observation provision to learn how to handle pupils from a ‘challenging class’:

I saw teachers doing things in different ways. I am quite stern with them... a lot of teachers took a far more light-hearted approach and the kids seem to respond to that ... I come across unprofessionalism every day ... they maybe side with the kids and then the kids look on you as an ogre. When I was at school and you had a strict teacher you did learn from them ... I don’t want to be their best friend (Geller, October).

The personal-professional ambiguity of role is no closer to resolution. It is a key learning issue for him, one experienced as dilemma: what professional future can survive the tension between present and past collegial exemplars, other than as ‘ogre’ or therapeutic ‘best friend’? Time is doubly relevant, for this also sits at odds with the formal guidance offered that such potential conflict be resolved ‘from day one’ by making his ‘personal code of practice ... compatible with school/department’ (GTCS 2005: 29).

At this stage, the policy seems both to fuel and deplete his professional learning: it provides for observations, a discourse of guidance expectations and SFR competence illustrations – in this case that he ‘is sensitive to the impact of (his) personal style ...on pupils’. Yet such illustrations seem anaemic given his own discourse of ogres and drownings, and stark polarities of ‘stern-best friend’, ‘extra-proper teacher’. Collegiality is also a contingent and uncertain resource. Yet if both induction policy and ‘ecologies of practice’ can be problematic, an even more ominous realisation suddenly looms, that there is an ‘economy of performance’ to all of this:
most schools are exam factories at the end of the day and interested in statistics. I don’t agree with any of that but at the end of the day I will be accountable ... I think for the first time I have seen the negative side of this job (Geller, October)

So the first Autumn term ends with an ‘end of the day’ eschatology. This is the time of his Interim Profile Report and he feels unable to make these doubts transparent to formal process (as he has to the teacher-researcher). Nevertheless he has to hang on for the moment, knowing that Local Authority promises a job next year ‘with the proviso’ he passes his induction year.

Next term, and rested by the holiday, some learning of what might exist between being ‘ogre’ and ‘best friend’ seems possible:

   Basically if the pupils can, in between direct teaching, ... tell you a joke or tell you something that happened outside school then ... that is a good indicator that they see you as person not just as somebody there to teach them .. I not trying to be bumptious but I try really hard to be fair and consistent (Geller, January)

What has also helped is that he has ‘broken away’ from his original mentor and has found a more helpful collegiality elsewhere – ‘you get a completely different picture’. Two months later, he observes an experienced teacher who combines her personal teaching style which, though not for him, helps her pupils’ learning:

   In a lot of ways I think you can get away with a lot of things if you have been here for ages ...
   Yeah, you learn to know when you can let go and just be yourself (Geller, March)

Time is crucial, both as continuity (being ‘here for ages’) but also in the discontinuity of a fresh start: as in his next revision of the ubiquity of education’s ‘economy of performance’

   I feel that in this school ... it is an exam factory. There is no real education going on ... I normally put up a case but I find that I have had to keep my mouth shut this year (Geller, May)

Perhaps the ‘economy of performance’ might impact differently at another time and place, so there may be if not resolution then a healthier ‘pulse’ to his desired professionalism.

Now nearing the end of the year, he looks back and forward over his professional life so far, and there is an elegiac register to how he feels:

   The values that I had when I became a probationer or even a student are totally changed ... but I have had to change them in order to fit into the curriculum, which is really sad I think and going to be an issue for me (Geller, May).

His survival seems to have involved more of St. Pierre’s subversion than maintenance of self. Yet in mourning the death of one possible professional life, there is a partial resurrection: he has a lifeline in that he is getting ‘established’, because ‘the kids now know me’ and he is ‘building up a reputation’. At least this makes ‘an issue’ rather than total defeat for his professionalism, presently torn between the uncertainty of moving on, or applying to stay in the ‘exam factory’. This of course, lies buried beneath what may be formally recorded as evidence of competence in ‘reflection’ of ‘self-evaluation’.

Geller: false mournings and life after probation

Geller’s story is presented here not as an exemplar case of ‘the new teacher’ but that of ‘a new teacher’ and what he sees as possibilities for his early professionalism. In his account, the specifics of his school make for a highly textured and shifting context for his experience of induction: a staff whose ‘morale is rock bottom’, both capable of ‘unprofessionalism’ and as touchstones for his own professional desires; pupils who are ‘fantastic’ but with ‘deep rooted problems’; his ideal of education as learning vitiated within a context of ‘exam factory’ accountability; and an induction process providing both constraints and opportunities, contingently a Standard to ‘try to fit into’ as well as guide to growth. As his ‘teacher-researcher’ kept contact beyond the probationary year some aspects of role, boundary, time and possibilities for professionalism are briefly picked up next.
Even by October of his first post-induction term as fully registered teacher, the impact of a full timetable makes for a dramatic revision of what he had recently mourned: for ‘the probationary year is a false indication of what life will be like’ and it was a false grieving:

Now I find I have hit reality, so a lot of the time you –well not dumb down – but stick to what is in the book. That is something every new teacher should be aware of (Geller, October Year 2).

His high probationary standards for curriculum creativity were not so much ideals as naively idealistic. He embraced the role he thought was dying: ‘I am warming to what I have now’ and does not hanker so much by ‘looking for the ideal school’. He has much greater confidence, not only within his own classroom but because he has made a whole-school impact with the ‘language-day’ event he was denied as probationer and has also initiated an extra-curricular language club and a school trip.

Crucially, he now more readily aligns himself with colleagues, at least those like himself who are mainly class-teachers. This in part because of a ‘massive influx’ of new staff: ‘fresh ideas and enthusiasm ....hopefully we can change people's way of thinking’. This new collegiality might challenge an older one. Also the shift is in part because of what he sees both new and old collegiality sharing in the face of three major enemies of professionalism. The first is a ‘hideous’ accountability system imposed by the senior management team (SMT) on behalf of ‘Scottish Office’: ‘nobody trusts (teachers’) judgement’ and instead are only bothered about a ‘number crunching’ which ‘does not tell you what is really going on in the school eg. ethos, extra curricular work’. So the economy of performance retains a threatening presence, but he feels he is not on his own now. The second is an SMT offering ‘no back up’ especially for pupil discipline:

I understand why people don’t do things in this place any more if you don’t get the backing (Geller, October year 2).

The third foe is HMI (external inspectors) who offer ‘idealistic’ advice about classroom management: ‘more of the responsibility for this should lie with the professionals’. Where possible, he repositions his professionalism more collegially than in his probationary year:

I can sort of relax now and think that isn’t how most other people do it so I won’t either (Geller, October Year 2).

A new narrative of ‘realism’ for professionalism is being fashioned, which at its boundaries, is now fuelled by current ‘ecologies of practice’ as well as by recollections of his own pupillage and aspirations.

His role is also now seen differently. His supply-post mortifications apparently not only dead but forgotten and apart from ‘positive feedback after observations’, the loss of induction support is less mourned than seen as release. Now that ‘nobody is watching me as much’, he begins to celebrate a fuller version of how he sees his role:

I am a teacher now and so my job is to come in here and try and instil a bit of knowledge into these kids, albeit not necessarily French or Spanish, but some kind of discipline and try and enlighten them into life (Geller, October Year 2).

With a sense of greater autonomy, his former focus on academic learning is becoming more explicitly complicated by wider pastoral concerns. He has much better relationships with pupils partly because they see him around school and in extra-curricular activities, but also acknowledge him around the town: ‘they see you as a real person now; you live in the area’. As professional and person, he is becoming real to them as well as himself. But it is a controlled extension in that certain boundaries have to be kept: ‘my life can’t stop because of the job’. Seeing pupils outside school is a boon for relationships in school but it also ‘puts me on my guard’. St. Pierre’s question remains active; what must he subvert, what must he retain of his ‘self’?

Towards the end of the second year he is ‘much more confident to be who I am’, not just in judgements about curriculum (‘well I can leave this bit out’), but in his own room, his ‘territory’. He now feels established enough to envision his possible future life as a senior teacher:
I find myself looking up to where I want to aspire to but ... I don't want to be like that (Geller, May year 2)

‘Looking up’ is professionally mortifying, and looking around is only contingently attractive: his own department is ‘destructive’ and riven with petty rivalries, yet with other staff he feels ‘part of the community ... I know so many everybody, even the dinner ladies!’ This particular aspect of collegial ecology has become ‘the biggest thing’ and, along with his relationship to pupils, is what feeds his professional life: ‘everything I do is pupil orientated’.

I still get up in the morning and look forward to it and some days I leave school and am really happy and I think that was a great day (Geller, May year 2)

Though more celebrant than mourner, there is another twist in the tale. As a possible senior teacher, he sees his future professional life in the public sector as too vulnerable to outside interference, and if ventriloquised by the ‘number-crunching’ of an economy of performance register, the survival of its autonomy has to flourish elsewhere. So something he has trailed before has become a serious consideration: to move to the private sector where he believes ‘it is possible to be in charge of one branch of a subject and work your way up from there’.

‘No single story ... (but) shared narratives’ (Britzman 2003): Geller and others

If there is no ‘definitive model of induction’ (Totterdell et al 2004), there is no definitive inductee and Geller is not meant to stand for ‘the new teacher’. While a single case risks inflation, accounts without any contingent details of context and time risk being reductive. In giving some details of Geller’s account as a situated and mobile one, not much room has been left here for comparisons with other 27 probationers in the Scottish cohort. Some examples of how he was like and unlike others follow next, to indicate a brief counter to such risks.

To begin, no probationer failed to become fully registered (in England, early overall data suggest than only 1% fail – Totterdell et al 2002). Only one other in his post-induction year actually moved to the private sector, or even spoke of doing so. Others did share his initial mortifications, such as Richard whose desire to be ‘democratic’ died an early death: ‘they wiped the floor with me’ and shaped a limited recovery. If anything Geller was rather more diligent than most in referring to the SFR, which was more commonly regarded as ‘boring’ and ‘overwhelming’ in its detail by probationers. Yet even here there was variation: Rachael, a mature entrant in a very supportive school, found a way to engage with it, after feeling initially it was ‘heavy going ... and just tuning out’ later began to ‘just scan it’ and eventually thought it ‘worthwhile... just to make sure you were going in the right direction’. As with Geller, the Profiling and Report Forms with their ‘ticky box’ format (Rachael) were more uniformly regarded merely as a bureaucratic exercise, failing to acknowledge what all the probationers experienced as an intensely demanding and emotional year: there was ‘nothing that personalised about them’ (Linda), ‘just dates, no details’ (George) and something ‘to fit into’ (Geller) rather than inspire or guide...

There is also a shared new teacher concern with learning, both their own and that of their pupils. It is a key focus of role and professional self. What happened with Geller’s focus on subject expertise, and especially it’s widening to other kinds of learning (‘into life’), happened with others. For instance, Avril at first located her professional self in her love for teaching her subject, only to feel her school’s assessment obsession with ‘Levels’ made it reminiscent of a ‘curriculum of the dead’ (Ball 1995). She discovered a much wider concern for her pupils, and seriously considered a radical turn to a counselling role, before next determining to engage ‘with the guidance side of things’ but through the way she taught her subject.

In such ways early professional life can seem not just to involve the linearity of a formal induction discourse of ‘consolidations, extensions and additions’, and even if more colloquially felt as a ‘roller coaster’, also liable to stall, reverse or detour. The very compass setting for constructing ‘me as a teacher’ and what is being subverted, and what maintained, may not always be evident:

I still feel my ideas and ideals about being a teacher have stayed the same but they might have changed ... it’s something that’s difficult because they would be developing gradually so
it's hard to think back and think, 'What were my ideas about being a teacher like a year ago?' (Linda)

Given this, particular events can assume landmark significance, as with Linda again:

So I stopped the lesson and said 'Right we're revising the school rules' ...if I'd done that at the start of the year I probably would have been fighting ... So I see a huge difference now (Linda)

Such 'breakthroughs' (George) can be sometimes quite minor, sometimes major as with Geller's successful 'school language day'. Rachael's use of the SFR 'to keep focussed ...if you're without direction' was rare, but does indicate its possible value for this uncertain ride, if in the right context, over time, and used in particular ways.

Such comments also attest to the value of the teacher-researcher role. We already knew that beginning teachers had a 'roller-coaster' of an experience, but the texture of its emotional and cognitive twists, turns, ups and downs was rarely available to such continuity, punctuality and immediacy of contact. It is clear from the data that the probationers found it difficult to re-imagine who they had been. As they might experience time in non-chronological ways, less punctual interviews are more limited in their ability to reconstruct crucial details of a transition that is paradoxically both vivid yet easily forgotten.

Conclusion

One of the reasons for selecting Geller was to do with the way he linked his own experiences to a wider context, not just in the school but how he saw education as a whole. His narrative spanned recollected pupil idealisations as well as projections of himself as senior professional. Two years seemed to expand to 20 at times, and his account resonated with the research on more experienced teachers, whether theorised as 'organisational and occupational professionalisms', or as movements involving 'ecologies of practice' and 'economy of performance' registers. As new teacher, he was not alone in this, but was perhaps more untypical in the speed with which his narrative soon shifted its emphasis from one of 'professional on probation' to 'profession on probation'. Admittedly this risks another inflation: Geller as standing for the demise of 'occupational' professionalism' in the public sector. Against this, there have been attempts to show the shifts and uncertainties in his narrative, as both a pragmatic and principled 'pulse' rather than finality. On colleagues, his classroom persona, what he taught, and the induction provisions, his discourse is less stable than on his commitments to learning, to his desire to feel part of a community, and his rejection of accountability as 'number crunching'. As it is not easy to identify even a ‘typical’ Geller, except as a split, plural ‘changeling figure, a tentative line has to be drawn here as to his next move, and how he might read it.

The impact of induction policy seemed itself to depend very much on the variable trafficking between ecologies of practice and economy of performance. This is not to say that the impact of the policy is negligible for him; rather that its impact cannot be independent of more powerful discourses. Ideal types such as occupational and organisational professionalisms also seem to break up when close up (indeed Evetts points to their own lines of stress) – but they are not altogether unrecognisable. His particular case is not an evaluation of the new induction policy as such. Its value lies in the details of how it both troubles and comforts policy in ways that are not too readily generalised, and in seeing what such instances can be like, not from a policy management perspective as much those of new practitioners in research encounters with experienced practitioners.

On the basis of accounts of Geller and others, we began our own account with a desire to invert the dominant policy metaphors of induction as birth, welcome, growth, consolidation and addition, and instead attend also to its equally grounded experiences of derailment, failure and inadmissibility that beginners experience - induction's more unacknowledged doppelganger. New teachers corpse and lessons 'die a death', during what Geller felt as the lengthy gestation to birth as a 'proper' teacher. Even those 'births' he did experience could turn out to be short-lived, or get re-told as mistaken idealisations seen from the vantage point of a newly constructed 'real'. Our aim was to acknowledge such irrational, fragmented, emotionally contingent and idiosyncratic
qualities in teacher initiations. One of the most signal failings of the policy itself in the new teacher accounts is one version of its ‘economy of performance’, as embodied in the profiling process which was felt to annihilate the person, an effect also apparent in the universalizing and idealizing SFR discourse itself. Few felt either differentiated in its ‘pass-fail’ assessment, or shared a connection to a ‘new era of professionalism’.

Where existing school ecologies in the project cohort embraced the arrangements for observations and mentoring, there were more consistently celebratory narratives. It is interesting to note what happened even in Rachael’s school, when a new teacher, ‘unhappy’ with his mentor, requested a transfer. This was hard to take, given its otherwise exemplary collegial record. Nevertheless, it was seen as an occasion for the school to question itself rather than the probationer, and it arranged the move. It later heard that he was flourishing. This incident might help account for the school’s overall induction success, a recognition that policy guidance flourishes best in relation to local professional judgement and ecologies of practice – and that learning from failing is as much a positive part of individual as well as school experience as having successes that can be repeated.

References


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1 The data is from some of that gathered in the initial year of the TLRP project on ‘Enhanced Competence-Based Learning in Early Professional Development’, 2004-8. It draws on the experiences of 28 new teachers in Scotland (‘probationers’) in their 2004-5 induction year. The Scottish induction arrangements were first introduced during the academic year 2002-3. The project website is: www.ioe.stir.ac.uk
2 These discourses were referred to as an ‘economy of performance’ (largely quantitative manifestations of an audit and performance indicators) and various ‘ecologies of practice’ (professional dispositions and commitments individually and collectively engendered), so bear some resemblance to the discourses of organisational and occupational versions of professionalism, particularly her problematising of the possibility of ‘trust’ in a discursive context where professionalism is an ‘instrument of occupational change and social control in managerial discourse’ (2005: 3). However, they were not offered as ‘ideal types’ but used to sustain analytic interest in professionalism as ‘complex and inflected’, and how ‘professionals do not conduct their practices in “real” so much as they traffic between the twin abstractions of the ideal … and the unrealized’ in their professional talk (Stronach et al 2002: 132).

3 These were selected on the view that, as ‘insiders’ relieved of half their teaching duties and with on-site availability, they would be able to access more of the informal and contextual than outside researchers. Their interviews did not share a common structured schedule, though they did focus on common themes thought to be relevant to new teacher experiences: their views and experiences of settling in, establishing themselves, critical incidents, how they found the documentation and provisions of the new arrangements, relations with pupils and staff both formally and informally and so on. How they analysed their own data will be made available elsewhere, and their involvement in analysis as well as data collection is central to the purpose of the EPL project. The use made of that data in this paper is separate for the moment. However it is influenced by meetings and dialogue with the teacher-researchers over the initial year (2004-5) of team collaboration involving both Stirling and Manchester Metropolitan Universities. Over the four years of the project the processes of working together and separately are themselves being made an object of study.

4 The analysis offered in this paper reflects in part the themes as covered by the transcripts (averaging 12 per probationer) over the course of the year. Certain theoretical orientations have already been outlined, and these may differ from those of the teacher-researchers. Given the emphasis in this paper on discursive dynamics and context not all inductees feature, as such data requires at least some verbatim reporting with consequent pressure on space. The qualitative data was used to inform subsequent ‘indicators’ and a model for induction to be used in later phases of the project. The present paper is different, though drawing on this same data base, has a much more particular focus and is not an account of the much wider compass of the still ongoing project itself.

5 For example there are some more ‘holistic’ statements that while ‘new teachers can be pre-occupied with class organisation and management’, they may beginning to make ‘some contribution to the life of the school as a whole’. Other items relate to traditional classroom roles, such as ‘can set and mark homework which is varied in form, with clear purpose in relation to class work’ (consolidating and extending). Others indicate an ‘expansive’ professionalism, for example as a commitment to ‘work co-operatively with other professionals’ (consolidating). There are also eleven references drawing on a person-centred register in relation to learning. The word ‘personal’ appears five times, combined with ‘development’ ‘commitment’ and ‘growth’, ‘style of communication’ in a curricular reference for pupils. The related terms ‘self’ appears twice (as in ‘evaluation and ‘reflection’) and ‘own’ four times (as in ‘role’, ‘view’, ‘experience’ and implicitly with ‘style’).

6 Teacher attrition is higher in schools with high pupil ratios of Free School Meals and Special Educational Needs (Smithers and Robinson, 2003), and with ‘challenging behaviour’ and multicultural and multilingual populations (Hutchings et al, 2002). Schools with higher A-C GCSE rates, extra funding and status recognition tend to have higher teacher retention.

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