The Professional Learning of New Teachers in Scotland

Rachel Shanks


Introduction

Until recently, teacher development, workplace learning and induction have been treated as discrete areas of research. (Williams 2003) Teachers’ induction is about their learning, however, induction programmes have generally focused on a combination of support, development and assessment with little attention paid to the development and learning issues central to new teacher learning. (Stanulis, Burrill 2004, p.3) The induction year can be regarded as an intermediate stage between teacher education and full professional status. One theory of learning which can help to explain this transition is learning by participation. New teachers’ learning can be seen as the move from novice status to fully fledged participants in a community of practice. (Lave, Wenger 1991)

Peer support and the development of micro-political literacy can be important tools in this process of learning by participation. For new teachers their learning by participation occurs in the workplace through non-formal and informal learning. Non-formal learning is the learning that occurs outside formal situations, part of which is the informal learning that takes place in everyday situations such as work. The spaces and places the teachers learn in and the people they learn from and with will be explored in this paper. It is argued that too much emphasis is placed on the formal induction scheme in Scotland, in particular, formal continuing professional development and the mentor, while vital informal learning and support are ignored.

This research is part of the Scottish Teachers for a New Era (STNE) project at the University of Aberdeen. (School of Education, University of Aberdeen 2009) This 6 year programme has been designed to provide a continuum of support for the first six years of a B.Ed. graduate’s teacher education and professional development. Years 1 to 4 are the B.Ed. degree itself and then years 5 and 6 cover the induction year and the first year as a fully registered teacher. The aims of STNE
are fourfold: to develop a teacher for a new era; to encourage a new learning environment in initial teacher education; to create a new framework for continuous learning; and to foster a new professional culture. (Ibid)

The term “professional learning” or simply new teacher learning is preferred to the terms “professional development” and “continuing professional development” as many teachers understand the latter terms to mean formal courses and workshops they attend and not their everyday learning in the workplace. To understand this learning it is necessary to consider induction and new teachers’ learning, the induction scheme in Scotland, learning by participation, workplace learning and the informal and non-formal learning that occurs at work.

1. **Induction and new teachers’ learning**

During the induction year new teachers experience a combination of different types of learning situation: gradual social integration into the workplace; observation and listening; self-directed learning such as learning from doing work and more actively seeking out what needs to be known; formal professional development; and learning from the structured personal support of official mentors and/or other colleagues.

The intermediate or induction stage between university education and being a fully functioning professional can be termed as “proto-professionalism” for those still learning how to be a professional in their practice. (Hilton, Slotnick 2005) It has also been referred to as the “professional transition stage” and “the transition from student teacher to self-directed professional.” (Eldar, Nabel et al. 2003, p.45, Koetsier 1995, p.33) Induction year teachers and some fully registered teachers may be termed proto-professionals as they are still learning to be a professional teacher. The induction year can be regarded as a form of apprenticeship in the trajectory from novice to more experienced worker or professional: “apprenticeship is still a relevant vehicle through which to form a bridge between education and the workplace, to develop skills and knowledge, and to enable people and organisations to realise each other’s potential.” (Fuller, Unwin 2003, p.424)
Autonomy and choice are important factors in new teachers’ learning. (Felstead, Fuller et al. 2005, p.374, Sandholtz 2002, p.824, Livingston, Robertson 2001, p.194) The best form of induction might be one generated by teachers themselves. (Greenlee, Dedeugd 2002, p.70) While teachers are striving to meet the needs of individual pupils professional learning and development should aim to meet the needs of individual teachers. (Sandholtz 2002, p.827) Teachers’ continuing professional development must not be something that is ‘done’ to teachers instead they should feel ownership of it. (Livingston, Robertson 2001, p.193) Autonomy and choice in terms of professional development activities are important for two reasons: firstly, choice reinforces the professional identity and status of teachers as professionals; secondly, it increases the chances that the activities will be relevant to that individual teacher’s learning needs and professional interests. (Sandholtz 2002, p.824)

In one study rather than recommending one-to-one mentoring they preferred "schoolwide structures that promote integrated professional cultures with frequent exchange of information and ideas across experience levels.” (Moore Johnson, Birkeland 2003, p.608) School-wide structures may also incorporate peer support. The term "peer support" is used to mean the encouragement, assistance, possible collaboration and endorsement of those in the same position, namely other induction year teachers. For example, in peer support meetings new teachers can learn micro-political literacy enabling them to make sense of and improve their situation in school. This is in contrast to “fitting in as tactical compliance”. (Roberts, Graham 2008) Organisational micro-political literacy has been found to be important in other types of workplace. (Boud, Middleton 2003, p.197) Peer support can be very important:

"Many teachers described interactions with colleagues as the experiences that most profoundly influenced their teaching. In some cases, the teachers participated in formal peer coaching, but frequently the interactions were more informal.” (Sandholtz 2002, p.821)

With their peers beginning teachers can share ideas and information in a more open and freer way. This peer support may be part of the new teachers developing micro-political literacy as they are learning how to articulate and discuss the everyday political issues in their schools. New teachers may take micro-political action, meaning “those actions that aim at establishing,
safeguarding or restoring the desired working conditions.” (Kelchtermans, Ballet 2002, p.108) New teachers can be regarded as in a state of vulnerability or uncertainty. (Helsing 2007, Edwards, Gilroy et al. 2002) Two reasons for including micro-political literacy in teacher education are: firstly, so that teachers can positively engage with colleagues, administrators, parents and the wider community; and secondly, so that teachers can participate meaningfully in their schools as organisations. (Curry, Jaxon et al. 2008, p.661)

In supportive induction programmes teacher educators, school administrators, teachers and newly qualified teachers can create “a community of inquiry in a community of practice. This valuable school community reflects the need to better integrate theory and practice, thinking and acting.” (Eldar, Nabel et al. 2003, pp.45-46) In Scotland academics and the HMIe have called for higher education to develop a clear role in meeting beginning teachers’ CPD needs. (Reid, Weir 2008, p.98) This is precisely what the Scottish Teachers for a New Era project is trying to achieve. A school/university partnership such as STNE can increase the professional development and learning options for new teachers, for example by providing the structure for teacher collaboration activities. (Sandholtz 2002, p.825) In Scotland the key educational initiative A Curriculum for Excellence has also changed how teachers should be organising their planning and teaching. (Livingston, Robertson 2001, p.194)

2. The Scottish context
The McCrone Report focused on Scotland’s place in the global economy and how to equip teachers for the future. (A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century: The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Professional Conditions of Service for Teachers. 2000). This resulted in the McCrone Agreement with (Scottish Executive Education Department 2001) a simplified career structure and a guaranteed induction year for all newly qualified teachers in Scotland. (Scottish Executive Education Department 2001) This New Teacher Induction Scheme was introduced in Scotland in 2002. During the induction year teachers must satisfy the Standard for Full Registration. (General Teaching Council for Scotland 2006)
New teachers are provided with a number of supports or scaffolds to help them in their transition from student teacher to fully registered teacher. (Leavy, McSorley et al. 2007, p.1218) The induction scheme includes:

- a reduction in classroom teaching, namely 0.7 of a full time teacher’s teaching hours;
- the remaining 0.3 time is for continuing professional development;
- a supporter/mentor to oversee and guide the new teacher;
- the new teacher’s school being funded 0.1 of the mentor’s time to support the new teacher;
- observations by the supporter/mentor;
- planned continuing professional development by the school and local authority;
- personal continuing professional development;
- assessment against the Standard for Full Registration.

After the induction year Fully Registered Teachers must apply for temporary or permanent posts or apply to become a supply teacher with a local authority.

### 3. Research question and theoretical underpinnings

In examining the learning of induction year teachers three areas have become prominent; learning by participation; learning in the workplace; and learning that is either non-formal or informal. This has led to the following research question:

What role does informal and non-formal learning in the workplace play in the development of new teachers during their induction year in Scotland?

**(a) Learning by participation**

A new job can be seen as a great stimulus for learning. Lave and Wenger showed a great deal of learning can be by peripheral participation, in other words by seeing other people in action. (Lave, Wenger 1991) Lave and Wenger viewed learning as changing participation through changing practice. The action of participating in social practice is a way of belonging to a community. The fact of becoming a member allows participation, and thus learning, to occur. Lave and Wenger have used the term “legitimate peripheral participation” to explain this complex concept. Lave and
Wenger also view legitimate peripheral participation as referring to a process which is characterised by social structures and social relations:

"Legitimate peripheral participation provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artefacts, and communities of knowledge and practice. It concerns the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice." (Lave, Wenger 1991, p.29)

For Lave and Wenger (1991) communities are formed by practitioners who have shared procedures for talking and acting. To learn means to gradually be able to control these procedures through participation and also learn to control the tools of the community. This can be understood by saying that in order to learn a person must belong to something and the label ‘community’ is what that ‘something’ is. (Hodkinson 2004, p.13) Lave and Wenger do not give a specific definition for a community of practice. Instead they write that it is “a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice.” (Lave, Wenger 1991, p.98) A community of practice can be seen as being a tight-knit group of people while a set of more loosely connected people are part of a “learning field” or situated learning or learning as social participation in its wider sense. (Fuller, Hodkinson et al. 2005, p.59, Hodkinson, Hodkinson 2004, p.30, Boud, Middleton 2003, p.201) As well as communities of practice new teachers may form more informal networks which although looser than a community of practice may still result in their learning.

In situated learning theory the history or social structures in place are not the most important components. It is what Lave and Wenger call “the lived-in-world” which comes first. (Lave, Wenger 1991) For activity theorists it is the social and organisational context that is emphasised rather than the learning of individuals. Situated learning theory is “a satisfactory starting point when we look at novices gradually gaining competence in relatively stable practices.” (Engeström 2001, pp.141-142) By investigating what participants do over time it is possible to trace how their participation in the community changes and how these changes come about. One criticism of situated learning theory is that it does not give prominence to conflicts of interests, ideology or power. The extended use of metaphors such as participation and community can be seen as promoting practices as always being harmonious and free of conflict (Arnseth 2008, p.299).
new teachers their lack of power can be an important aspect of their induction year. It is also useful to look at “notions of identity and the key role of trust and power relations in the learning process.” (Boud, Middleton 2003, p.201)

(b) Workplace learning
Workplace learning has become much more important in the last decade “with policy-makers, employers and trade unions now actively pursuing their interests in workplace learning in a changing world.” (Senker, Hyman 2004, p.3) However, little is still known about workplace learning, in particular the informal or non-formal learning that goes on in workplaces. (Fuller, Unwin 2004, p.41, Unwin, Felstead et al. 2007, pp.345-346) It is important to understand and explain the ways in which “workplaces afford opportunities for learning and how individuals engage in learning.” (Billett 2002b, p.478) Workplace learning has been defined as “learning as an outcome of engagement in goal-directed activities that are structured by workplace experiences”. (Billett 2002a, p.58) This provides a useful foundation from which to discuss and conceptualise workplace learning experiences. The Teacher Induction Scheme can be seen as a type of “institutional intervention” which is placed over the processes and relationships involved in the journey from newcomer to old-timer. (Fuller, Unwin 2003, p.409)

Unlike most workplaces the primary function of schools is learning, but this function is not the learning of the workforce but the learning of the pupils or students. Workplace activities such as “doing the job, being shown things, engaging in self-reflection and keeping one’s eyes and ears open” can be “captured by the learning as participation metaphor.” (Felstead, Fuller et al. 2005, p.379) Workplace learning can be seen as taking place “within the format of asking for and giving advice in relation to commonplace work activities.” (Collin 2008, p.381) Workers can develop the art of ‘learning-by-walking-around’ and dropping in on someone and asking what they were doing or discussing current problems. (Collin 2008, pp.381-382) For improving practice the everyday workplace is the most important source of learning. (Felstead, Fuller et al. 2005, p.368) However, social relations at work, learning in them and learning from them can be seen as a double-edged sword as they can be both a source of pleasure and a source of pain. (Collin 2008, p.394)
There are two main pressures on workplace learning, namely, time and funding. (Hodkinson, Hodkinson 2003, p.13) Courses need to be “just-in-time” and are more worthwhile if they are done in conjunction with coaching and mentoring after the courses. (Eraut, Alderton et al. 2000) Similar findings were established in research on the Scottish Teacher Induction Scheme. (Pearson, Robson October 2005) If, on the other hand, the courses are too early or too late or there is no follow-up then the effort can be wasted. (Sandholtz 2002, p.825) A key criticism of apprenticeship in the last fifty years is the increased separation of on- and off-the-job training which leads to the separation of theory and practice. (Fuller, Unwin 1998, p.156) It has been argued that learning needs to be both on and off-the-job to be most effective (Eraut, Alderton et al. 2000). They conclude that “education and training policies which focus only on off-the-job learning are doomed to be ineffective” (Eraut, Alderton et al. 2000, pp.258-259). Rather than waiting “learners generally found it quicker and more effective to get information directly from more knowledgeable colleagues.” (Eraut 2007, p.414)

There are many learning activities that can be located within work or learning processes: asking questions and getting information; locating resource people; listening and observing activities; learning from mistakes; giving and receiving feedback; and mediating artefacts, for example handover notes. (Ibid) The extent to which any or all of the above activities take place will depend on the context the new teachers find themselves in. Most learning in the workplace is informal and involves a “combination of learning from other people and learning from personal experience, often both together.” (Eraut 2004, p.248) This can be encapsulated by the phrase “learning from experience”, a catch-all expression that dominates both adult education and workplace learning without enough critical analysis. (Ibid)

(c) **Formal, informal and non-formal learning**

In educational research much is made of the distinction between informal and formal learning. (Edwards, Miller 2007, p.267) There is a “growing belief that the distinction between formal and informal education is unhelpful because it implies the superiority of learning which takes place within educational institutions over, and distinct from, that which occurs in settings such as the
workplace.” (Fuller, Unwin 1998, p.158) Although learning in formal contexts is important “this paradigm fails to capture much of the learning that occurs in the workplace.” (Eraut, Alderton et al. 2000, p.232) Formal learning has been found to be less important than anticipated and early career professionals are “more likely to be given advice and feedback informally by those around them than by those designated by their mentors.” (Eraut 2007, p.408) Although definitions of formal learning exist it is also necessary to understand the informal or non-formal learning that also takes place. (Eraut 2000, p.114, Boud, Middleton 2003, p.194) There is an argument against describing workplaces as informal learning environments, as this is “negative, inaccurate and ill-focused.” (Billett 2002a, p.58) Rather than attempt to define formal and informal learning it is possible to see informal learning as being closer to the informal end of a continuum which runs from formal to informal learning. (Eraut 2004, p.250) One shortcoming in Lave and Wenger’s (1991) account of learning is that “it does not include a role for formal education institutions in the newcomer’s learning process.” (Fuller, Unwin 2003, p.408) However, the reverse is true in terms of teacher induction but non-formal learning is too important to be ignored by policy makers, or excluded by researchers. (McNally 2006, p.87) The concept of informal learning should be a major element in “a theoretical basis for research on the experience of becoming a teacher or learning to teach.” (McNally, Boreham et al. 2004, p.4) The concept of ‘relational conditions’ has been developed and covers behaviour such as ‘letting go’, ‘dropping in’, ‘always there’ and ‘one of the team’ for new teachers who lived between the extremes of ‘total abandonment’ and ‘rigidly controlled, stifling support’. (Ibid) The informal learning of new teachers must be considered in the context of workplace learning as this is where their informal learning will take place most of the time. There is a “symbiotic relationship between working and learning”. (Eraut, Alderton et al. 2000, p.258). An important source of learning for new teachers can be informal spontaneous collaboration. This collaboration emphasises “the informal, the unplanned and the opportunist providing further support for the recognition of the non-formal in the first year of teaching.” (Williams 2003, p.214)
In one study “informal learning in the early experiences of teaching was ... little more, perhaps, than a vague notion of the crucial importance of spaces, places and people.” (McNally, Boreham et al. 2004, pp.2-3) Informal learning was viewed as a “lifelong process in which people learn from everyday experience whereas non-formal is seen as the organized educational activity outside formal systems.” (McNally, Boreham et al. 2004, p.3) The term ‘informal’ was used to cover everyday and organised activities and the notion of ‘informal education’ which included interactions with friends, family and work colleagues and a clear definition was necessary in order to recognise the “crucial learning that takes place in ways which would not be described as formal.” (Ibid)

Three significant areas of informal learning have been identified in workplace learning research: understanding and control of organisational processes; negotiating the political; and dealing with the atypical. (Boud, Middleton 2003, p.198) It is important to note that “informal learning is highly contextualised and individualistic in the sense that it is based on the cognitive, affective and behavioural development of the teacher.” (Turner 2006, p.317) This leads to the problem with how to record, authenticate, recognise and value non-formal or informal learning in the workplace. (Skule 2004, p.10) Just as it is difficult to measure professional development: “A certificate of course attendance is an indication of physical presence only and not of learning”. (Friedman, Phillips 2004, p.370) There are problems in researching non-formal learning because it may not be planned, measured, talked about or even done consciously. There is difficulty in determining the source of learning when trying to pinpoint it. Learning “can be absorbed from others, through informal conversations more than formal observation, from ideas at university, but their sense of developing as a teacher is often attributed simply to their personal experience of teaching classes, a kind of ‘personal learning’.” (Eraut 2004)

In this research want to explore the workplace learning of new teachers, in particular the non-formal learning and informal learning that takes place with colleagues.

4. Research methods

In 2008-2009 a pilot study was conducted with questionnaires, both paper and on-line, sent to University of Aberdeen educated induction year teachers. Eight beginning teachers were also
individually interviewed twice during the year, either face-to-face or by telephone. Two types of
documentation were collected from the interviewed teachers: documentation relating to the new
teacher; and documentation relating to their school. The new teacher’s documentation comprised
their career entry profile; their interim profile and final profiles for the General Teaching Council of
Scotland (GTCS). The profiles include their professional development action plans; their CPD
records; and their “key strengths and areas for development” document. The school
documentation included the school’s website (if one existed), information on the Learning
Teaching Scotland Schools Online website and the school’s most recent HMIE (Her Majesty’s
Inspectorate of Education) report (if published within the last three years). These documents
provided contextual information on the school setting, for example, the level of deprivation, the
numbers of pupils and teachers.

By using a mixed methods approach data can come together in a holistic way to give a fuller
picture of the development and learning processes of beginning teachers in Scotland. The
“combination of qualitative and quantitative data provides a more complete picture by noting
trends and generalisations as well as in-depth knowledge of participants’ perspectives.” (Creswell,
Plano Clark 2007, p.33) For example, in this research the beginning teacher questionnaires may
not tell the whole story of the learning and development of new teachers in Scotland.
The purpose of the study was to find out the views of the beginning teachers themselves as they
embarked on their teaching careers. They were able to say if or how they differentiated between
formal and informal learning, between school or work-based learning and external learning
opportunities. The interview respondents had the opportunity to reflect on their continuing
professional development and other professional learning at regular intervals and so, in a way, it
was a professional development opportunity for them. It is hoped that this did not skew the data.

By analysing the questionnaires conducted with a larger cohort of teachers it is possible to
determine if the interviewed teachers’ opinions and experiences vary to a great extent from other
new teachers.
5. Research findings – spaces, places and people

In identifying themes from the quantitative and qualitative data McNally’s phrase about “the crucial importance of spaces, places and people” became more and more apposite. (McNally, Boreham et al. 2004, pp.2-3) For the new teachers the physical places they worked in, their space, and the people they worked with were of utmost importance. These induction year teachers learnt from colleagues, both teachers and non-teachers and they learnt from and with their pupils. Their official mentor was not necessarily the most important person in their induction year. They did not talk about the Standard for Full Registration unless prompted. The teachers were learning from colleagues, they were learning informally and they were learning in different places and spaces.

(a) Spaces and places

The term “place” is for a physical location while “space” is to do with the interactions between people at certain times or in certain places:

“Spatiality is primarily to be seen not in terms of a backdrop against which action takes place but rather in terms of activity or practice. In other words, space is enacted or performed: constituted through action, for example, acts of occupancy or appropriation.” (Mulcahy 2006, p.55)

Through induction new teachers can be helped to “understand and navigate the institutional and organizational space of their schools.” (Curry, Jaxon et al. 2008, p.661) Boundary spaces where joint work occurs can lead to sites for expanding mutual understanding of shared tasks and problems and the development of expertise in negotiating meanings and responses to those meanings (Edwards, Mutton 2007, p.509). An important location for everyday learning at work is at “the points of intersection between work and social spaces” and it is necessary “to abandon simplistic dichotomies between work, social and learning space.” (Solomon, Boud et al. 2006, p.3)

In this area

“... ideas of space are helpful in thinking about workplace learning. Indeed the term workplace learning itself draws our attention to its place or space. In other words workplace learning has particular kinds of meanings and practices because of its location and because that location is not an educational institution.” (Ibid) (Italics in original)

Teachers are of course working in an educational institution but their work is related to the education of other rather than themselves. One study conducted with four different groups of
teachers in Australia found the participants referring to unexpected learning spaces, such as lunch in staff rooms, drinks at local cafés and the shared lift to and from work. These learning spaces could be described as either ‘work spaces’ or ‘socialising spaces’ or it may be more appropriate to understand them as “hybrid spaces, that is, at one and the same time work and socializing spaces where the participants are both working and not working.” (Solomon, Boud et al. 2006, pp.4-5)

The notion of ‘hybrid space’ is a term for learning spaces at work that are considered as both working spaces and not working spaces. Using Bhabha’s (1990) concept of third space then hybrid space is a metaphor for investigating the complexities of the new identities, processes and relationships being produced at work in the contemporary workplace. (Solomon, Boud et al. 2006, p.6) To understand the features of these hybrid learning spaces various times and places should be examined: overlap periods (such as refreshment breaks) where workers are not ‘entirely’ workers; actual spaces in workplaces that are typically labelled as productive or non-productive, such as workrooms or tearooms; and talking spaces where people have conversations within or between work times (e.g. in a car driving home from work). (Solomon, Boud et al. 2006, p.7)

Other ‘in-between’ spaces are the geographical space between work and the participant’s home and the temporal space of lunchtime, ‘in-between’ sanctioned working hours. (Solomon, Boud et al. 2006, p.8)

**Table 1. Binaries and in-between spaces in the workplace** adapted from (Solomon, Boud et al. 2006, p.11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On-the-job</th>
<th>In-between space</th>
<th>Off-the-job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal Worker</td>
<td>Travelling to work</td>
<td>Informal Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lunch time</td>
<td>being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker Working</td>
<td>Staff room</td>
<td>Learner Playing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productive</td>
<td>Local café</td>
<td>Non-productive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Break times</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One difficulty for researchers is that it may be ”the in-betweenness of the space that provides productive potential and once we start codifying or overcoding it, this potential can be lost.” (Solomon, Boud et al. 2006, p.12) For some new teachers physical space is an important issue, for example if they do not have their own teaching space they cannot organise the classroom they way they want “and so makes it more difficult to establish themselves as teachers in the eyes of
the children they teach.” (McNally, Boreham et al. 2004, p.7) Teacher 5, one of the secondary teachers, found it very difficult without their own classroom. The teacher had to carry boxes of materials to and from classrooms every day and found it particularly difficult setting up the classroom whiteboard before classes. The lack of their own classroom heightened their fear of the whiteboard technology because they had no time to check that everything was working before the pupils arrived.

The staffroom was seen as a different special place and space separate to the rest of the school. Teacher 6 spoke of the fact that they had “their teacher name and their staffroom name”. Physical spaces could be a barrier to the teacher’s practice and to pupils learning. At one school almost all the windows leaked, “bits of the ceiling and things falling down … it’s not what it should be” and there was a “gloomy sort of environment … probably puts us down, but it also puts the children down.” (Teacher 1)

Place and space can also have positive effects, in particular for secondary teachers who may have a departmental resource room or who may all have classrooms beside one another. Physical places can create spaces for teachers to meet informally, share ideas and collaborate. Physical proximity can encourage the teachers “to work closely together and spend non teaching time together providing opportunities for positive learning and development.” (Hodkinson, Hodkinson 2005, p.127) Two of the three secondary teachers had subject colleagues close at hand to ask questions and gain support from. Three of the primary teachers were also in the position of being close to teachers who had taught their class the year before or were teaching the same year group and who they could ask for help.

Teachers’ own practice can create a space for them to operate within. By exercising micro-political literacy teachers can carve out “a space on the margins of their school from which to critically engage themselves in efforts to transform their school and sustain their ideological commitments.” (Curry, Jaxon et al. 2008, p.672) A new teacher inquiry group apprenticed the teachers into becoming not just professionals but change agents, as well as new teachers. This can be seen as a “complex and micro-politically precarious process of teacher socialization”. (Ibid) The provision of
time, space and a structure for new teachers to explore their induction experiences and questions together can help to mitigate the vulnerability, intensity and isolation which are traditionally associated with entry into teaching. (Ibid)

(b) People
Those who have been teaching longer may resist the ideas of newcomers. (Curry, Jaxon et al. 2008, p.661) The induction year teachers did not all have a comfortable school environment to rely on. Some staff were not helpful to the induction year teachers. "in fact there is a big negative group and trying out new things is seen as a bad thing." (Teacher 1) The induction year teacher resisted this behaviour but felt it was because they had another induction year teacher in the school for peer support that they were able to do this. In answer to the question “Who has been the most important person in your induction year?” Teacher 1 responded “the other probationer. ... It’s just been an absolute godsend to have her in the school as well.” For five of the eight induction year teachers their mentor was not the most important person in their induction year. Teacher 7 said “any time I’ve had concerns, or anything that’s come up, I’ve been able to nip just downstairs and ask, ..., did this happen last year, is this a new thing, any idea why this might be going on? ... so I can nip down and just check” This was to talk to the teacher who had taught her class the year before not to her ever-busy mentor, the depute head teacher.

The questionnaire was completed in November 2008 by 39 new teachers, approximately 11% of the 2008 teacher education graduates from the University of Aberdeen that year. The teachers appeared to be most positive about advice and feedback with 76.3% regarding it as very important. They were also more positive about the value of informal discussions with colleagues than the meetings with their mentor with 68.6% rating the former in the highest category with 58.3% rating the latter most highly. Observation by others would also appear to be regarded more highly than mentor meetings with 63.2% rating it in the highest category. The comments written as advice for next year’s induction year teachers reaffirm these findings. One respondent put “Get to know your colleagues, share resources, ideas + good practice.” Another put ”ask for help”. One wrote "Speak to other teachers outside your department. Go to staffroom. Speak to janitor/office..."
staff/technicians.” Another “use all feedback anyone gives you.” In the “any other comments” section one teacher noted that so far they had had no formal meetings with their mentor as their mentor was also new in post “However, others in the department have been v. helpful and filled this gap.”

During the first year of teaching there can be a transition of new teachers moving from relying on the support of the head teacher and teaching staff to becoming more confident and receiving support from the pupils themselves. (Eldar, Nabel et al. 2003, p.42) Pupils were generally discussed in a positive way by the new teachers in this study. (Moore Johnson, Birkeland 2003, p.608) Teacher 4 spoke very movingly of her relationship with her pupils: “I said to myself ‘Oh God I belong here, they [the pupils] expect me to be here, they know how it works and they like how it works and I like them.’” Another teacher spoke of the pupils: “You get to make your own decisions and you really get to know the children and what they’re like and what they can do and what they can’t do.” (Teacher 5) “It gets to the point that you feel like they are your children and you keep saying, oh yes my kids are doing this, but they’re not mine ... I’ve learned a whole lot from the children and like the right ways to deal with them and they’re all very different so.” (Teacher 1)

However, two of the teachers spoke of not trusting the pupils with one teacher believing their pupils were lying until forced to realise that they had read the books they had said they had read. The new teachers did not talk of formal continuing professional development as being their most important learning, in particular local authority workshops and school in-service days were often filled with content that was either irrelevant or repetitive. School in-service days at the beginning and end of terms often consisted of cleaning out cupboards in classrooms. Even when the new teachers were at formal CPD events it was actually the social activities that were the most important: “that’s when you really open up. That’s, that’s probably the best part of the day to be honest.” (Teacher 1) The formal learning that the new teachers did find useful tended to be from special courses or workshops that they had been sent on that were for any stage of teacher, not only for induction year teachers. For example, the active play approach (teacher 1) and moving image education (teacher 4).
6. Conclusions and implications
From the interviews and questionnaire responses it can be seen that informal and non-formal learning are a key part of new teachers’ learning in their induction year. This informal, spontaneous support is highly valued but it is “impossible to legislate for or to provide through formal imposition.” (Williams, Prestage et al. 2001, p.263) Spontaneous collaboration consists of the informal, the unplanned and the opportunistic. (Williams, Prestage et al. 2001, p.264) This leads to an interesting paradox that “the characteristics that take induction practice beyond the satisfactory and into the realms of excellence are, by their nature, not amenable to statute or external mandate.” (Williams, Prestage et al. 2001, p.265)

Informal learning must be seen as an inevitable part of the early professional development of teachers. This is not to deny or exclude the contribution of more formal structures and systems, or to be unduly critical, provided the formal parts are not presented as “dogma or panacea.” (McNally 2006, p.87) There is currently too much emphasis on the formal elements of the Teacher Induction Scheme in Scotland. Informal learning has been “neglected in official policy statements and standards in favour of more formal structures.” (McNally, Boreham et al. 2004, p.4) In formal standards and systems it is impossible to capture the complex and personal nature of the first year of teaching. (McNally 2006, p.88) Early professional development policy does not recognise the problematic nature of the theory-practice divide or that the transition from student to teacher can be difficult in both a personal and a professional way. (McNally, Boreham et al. 2004, p.2) The experience of moving from student to teacher can be termed as one of “becoming rather than of incremental learning; it is about who you are as much as what you know”. (McNally 2006, p.89) The interviewed teachers did not refer to the Standard for Full Registration. What was uppermost in their minds was how to be a teacher in their own eyes, in their colleagues’ eyes and in their pupils’ eyes rather than vis-à-vis a formal document.

The current emphasis on appointed mentors does not recognise the reality that new teachers approach their subject colleagues, the teacher next door, the teacher who shares the same year group and so on. Often this is because their official mentor has too many other responsibilities, being a departmental head, depute head teacher or head teacher. If mentors are “forced to fit
mentoring in around the edges of full-time teaching, they lean toward “fixing” novices’ problems rather than treating them as occasions for joint problem solving or shared inquiry.” (Stanulis, Burrill 2004, p.15) Rather than leaving everything to the official mentor and the informal support of other colleagues other support mechanisms for new teachers would be useful, especially for those teachers who are not supported in their schools by their colleagues. This could include formal structures to facilitate peer support, whole school support and the creation of networks for teachers in smaller schools. In order to improve teacher induction Higher Education institutions and schools “need to think less about rigid systems of bureaucratic accountability” and “think more about self-organising networks of mutual co-operation which are geared pedagogically at producing rounded professionals.” (Edwards, Mutton 2007, p.509)

It can be said that there is a lottery in terms of induction placement in the Scottish system. Teachers may succeed or fail due to the hit and miss of school allocation. Once the General Teaching Council of Scotland has allotted new teachers to the local authorities it is the local authority induction co-ordinators who decide where to send the novice teachers. These decisions can be of enormous importance as the teacher interviews showed the wide range in welcome and support that is handed out to new teachers. The “extent to which there was a good “fit” between a new teacher and his or her school proved to be critical in that teacher’s eventual satisfaction.” (Moore Johnson, Birkeland 2003, p.598)

New teachers learn in their classrooms and in the spaces and places in and around their schools. They learn from their colleagues and mentors and also from their pupils. Perhaps the ultimate goal of induction is “to instil in beginning teachers the notion that learning to teach is a process that is never finished.” (Stanulis, Burrill 2004, p.20)

References


**Contact details**

Rachel Shanks  
MacRobert Building, King's College, University of Aberdeen, King Street, Aberdeen AB24 5UA  
r.shanks@abdn.ac.uk  
01224 274523

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