



ESCalate Student 2010 Grant Project Final Report

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Project Title Supporting the Professional Learning of Induction Year Teachers in Scotland

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Final Report

1. Supporting the Professional Learning of Induction Year Teachers in Scotland

A regional seminar was held at the University of Aberdeen on 7th February 2011. The participants included local authority officers, head and depute head teachers, established and newly qualified classroom teachers and university staff. A presentation was given by Rachel Shanks on her research findings on how induction year teachers learn in the workplace. This was a mixed methods study which included questionnaires followed by semi-structured interviews with induction year teachers in Scotland. Over two school years a total of 242 questionnaires were completed and 18 induction year teachers were interviewed. The research investigated:

- What are induction year teachers learning?
- Which activities do they learn from?
- Who are they learning with or from?
- What are the factors that affect their learning?

This area of research had become topical with the publication of the Donaldson Review at the end of 2010 which included a commitment to a continuum of teacher education (Recommendations 3 and 10). Donaldson (2010) also called for a change in the balance of CPD activities from set-piece events to self-evaluation and professional collaboration (Recommendation 33).

The findings from the study included several concerning how new teachers learn on their own, what they would describe as “doing the job”, and they also learnt with others, for example through discussions and observations. This showed that the new teachers learnt about teaching and how to be a teacher informally as well as formally with their mentor and at CPD events. It was found that their own classroom and other teachers’ classrooms were the most important places for them to learn in. The induction year teachers highlighted the importance of learning from their colleagues, including other new teachers and how important it was to feel supported by the head teacher. They needed space to be a new teacher, in other words, they needed to be accepted as a teacher and not treated like a student teacher.

A positive effect of place and space was when supportive colleagues were close by (Hodkinson, Hodkinson 2005). Interviewees spoke of the teacher “across the way”, “down the corridor” and “next door”. Physical spaces, such as the staffroom, a resources room, or the canteen at course venues, provided space for teachers to meet informally and share ideas.

The implications of the research are that induction year teachers need their own space, they need somewhere to talk to colleagues informally and they need to be close to someone to go to for help and advice. With support from the head teacher and colleagues the new teachers develop the feeling that they belong. For example, one teacher responded that the biggest surprise in their induction year was: “How quickly I felt like a teacher and part of the school and the fact that other colleagues come to me for advice” (questionnaire response in May 2010).

The teachers’ own practice can create a space for them to operate within while some new teachers will be provided space by their colleagues or by exercising micro-political literacy, they will carve out a space on the margins of their school (Curry, Jaxon et al. 2008).

The conclusions of the research are that as well as formal systems of support, new teachers need opportunities to create a space and place of their own and new teachers find it easier to learn in an expansive learning environment with supportive colleagues.

The 25 seminar participants broke into small groups to discuss how their partnership working could address the following issues:

1. How can new teachers be better supported in their transition into the workplace?
2. How can the mentor/ induction year teacher relationship be supported more effectively and consistently?
3. How can partners work more closely to ensure that activities complement one another?
4. How can informal learning in the workplace be supported more effectively?

The seminar gave attendees an opportunity to discuss these questions and find out what common solutions they could find to address them, such as time and space in schools for more collegiate working. These discussions were focused on the recommendations of the Donaldson Report and ongoing negotiations are taking place to implement future partnership work in this area.

References

Curry, M., Jaxon, K., Russell, J.L., Callaghan, M.A. and Bicais, J., 2008. Examining the practice of beginning teachers’ micropolitical literacy within professional inquiry communities. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, **24** (3), 660-673.

Hodinkson, H. and Hodkinson, P., 2005. Improving schoolteachers' workplace learning. *Research Papers in Education*, 20 (2), 109-131.

2. Project overview

A regional workshop was held for those working with student teachers and induction year teachers in the north of Scotland. The aim was to share expertise and research activities in order to improve outcomes for induction year teachers, such as the harmonisation of professional learning activities between universities and local authorities. The original 1st December date had to be postponed due to severe snow but on 7th February the snow had thawed and the seminar went ahead.

Twenty-five participants attended the seminar and gave very positive feedback. They discussed how new teachers can be better supported in their transition into the workplace; how the mentor/ induction year teacher relationship can be supported more effectively and consistently; how partners can work more closely to ensure that activities complement one another; and how informal learning in the workplace can be supported more effectively.

3. Outputs

- Regional seminar held on 7th February 2011 at the University of Aberdeen School of Education with 25 participants
- Analysis of the seminar is ongoing and will lead to a briefing paper which will be uploaded on the University of Aberdeen School of Education website and the ESCalate website. In both cases reference will be made to the ESCalate funding and the ESCalate logo will be included. To be completed by end of August 2011.

4. Details of any future planned dissemination activities

The briefing paper, referred to above, will be expanded into a paper to be submitted to a journal and this will cover the recommendations of the Donaldson Review which relate to the Teacher Induction Scheme in Scotland and the future of partnership working between local authorities, schools and university education departments. To be submitted by end of November 2011.

5. Expenditure profile

6. Supporting the Professional Learning of Induction Year Teachers in Scotland

The aim of this project was to further enhance the co-ordination and provision of professional learning models and opportunities for induction year teachers in the north of Scotland. The School of Education's Promoting Partnership

Team works closely with local authorities and schools to enhance the continuum of teacher learning and development for student teachers and early career teachers.

With ESCalate's funding, we were able to host, at the University of Aberdeen, a well-attended and useful Regional Seminar on 7th February 2011. The theme was how to support the professional learning of induction year teachers. Some 25 attendees included local authority officers, head and depute head teachers, established and newly qualified classroom teachers and university staff.

Rachel Shanks spoke about her research findings on induction year teachers' professional learning. The presentation was very well-received and generated a lot of discussion around the following questions:

1. How can new teachers be better supported in their transition into the workplace?
2. How can the mentor/ induction year teacher relationship be supported more effectively and consistently?
3. How can partners work more closely to ensure that activities complement one another?
4. How can informal learning in the workplace be supported more effectively?

The attendees discussed how time and space, such as social areas, were needed in order to work more closely with colleagues. They also talked about the way induction year teachers benefit from visiting their school before the start of the school year. Participants discussed how schools could develop more supportive atmospheres in order to offer peer support and show their respect for new teachers. Support from schools' senior management teams was also examined as an area to work on in future.

The seminar gave attendees a welcome opportunity to discuss these questions and find out what common solutions they could find to address them. These discussions were focused on the recommendations of the Donaldson Report and ongoing negotiations are taking place to implement future partnership work in this area.

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