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Title:

Feet on the Ground and Running: Professional Support for Beginning Teachers in Tamworth District Schools and at the University of Newcastle

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Abstract

The outcomes of the Ministerial Review of Teacher Education undertaken by Dr Gregor Ramsey combined with current issues surrounding the supply and maintenance of a quality teaching service in NSW provide fertile ground for research and development of programs to support beginning teachers in their first years of appointment. A discussion of the existing culture of professional support for 'beginning teachers' in NSW state schools provides a context for scholarly investigation. Moreover evidence provided by an analysis of relevant literature (eg Ingersoll, 2001, Johnson et al 2001, Carter 1999, Kardos et al, 2001) reveals a possibility that the provision of professional support with 'feet on the ground and running' in schools and universities, may assist in maintaining quality of and for the next generation of teachers.

One initiative designed to provide this form of professional support is the *Academic Associate: Teacher Education*, a conjoint appointment with the Department of Education and Training (DET) and the University of Newcastle. In this paper, I propose to share the theory and practice of this initiative, in order for other education providers to consider the development of further positions to support beginning teachers. The essential component of this project is to 'have a direct influence or impact on the learning outcomes of students in rural areas, through the integration of initial teacher education and ongoing professional development programs through the school/university project' (DET Working Paper 2001). These programs include induction, supervision and mentoring strategies for 'beginning teachers' in schools. This position provides a unique opportunity for the development and implementation of strategies to support preservice university students and initial service 'beginning teachers' both at the university and in schools, creating 'linkages' between the theory and practice of teaching and learning.

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Introduction

The provision of professional support for beginning teachers at the school site is not a new concept. Probation programs first appeared in Canadian schools in 1969 as one of the earliest attempts to provide a form of induction and support for beginning teachers (Wright 1997 in McCormack and Thomas 2001 p1). Whilst Ramsey (2001) has been critical of induction processes in NSW state schools, many provide well-planned and organized strategies that support beginning teachers in their first weeks of appointment. As stated in the position brief, part of the role of the Academic Associate: Teacher Education is to coordinate beginning teacher induction programs in the district with 'feet on the ground and running' in schools. It is this project, combined with providing opportunities for the professional development of supervisors and mentors (through both formal study and informal learning programs) that may assist in the further development of professional learning cultures in schools. Through the development of school-based induction programs and professional development/learning plans for beginning teachers, supervisors and mentors can take up opportunities to refresh and regenerate their own professional learning.

Background

Whilst the original intent of this paper was to investigate and discuss support for both preservice and newly appointed teachers, the research task was so wide ranging that an analysis and discussion of professional support in schools and at universities for preservice teachers will be the subject of a following paper. However, supporting preservice teachers, as part of the supervision and mentoring process and in the Faculty of Education, will be mentioned in the section which discusses the operation of the Academic Associate: Teacher Education position. For the purposes of this paper the term 'beginning teacher' is used to describe graduates in their first year of teaching 'permanent on probation', a 'mobile' teacher attached to a school for a predetermined time or a contract casual employed for periods of a term or longer, in NSW state schools. 'Preservice' teachers are those enrolled in teacher education courses in universities.

The NSW Department of Education and Training employs more than 65,000 teachers who are ideally positioned to provide newly appointed teachers with a high level of support and

professional development. At an average age of 43 (Ramsey 2001), the teaching service has much to share with the new generation of teachers who are making their way into public education. These wise and experienced educators also act as colleagues, mentors and supervisors to the many thousands of preservice teachers from teacher education institutions who undertake the professional experience components of their training in NSW state schools. It is crucial to point out however that this wealth of experience and knowledge may be lost to us in NSW as it could be in Northern America through the 'revolving door' of teacher attrition and turnover (Ingersoll 2001) as well as to high rates of resignation and retirement.

An analysis of North American research reveals similar characteristics with NSW in terms of teacher supply, turnover and maintenance. Whilst North American authorities are looking at a target of 2.2 million teachers (Ingersoll 2001, Johnson 2001) to meet demands over the next ten years, Ramsey (2001) suggests that we may be looking at the supply of 54,000 teachers to replace those who will leave the NSW state school system over the same period (p190). Fewer teachers are training than in previous years, so it is important that we maintain those who enter the teaching service. However these writers also remind us that those who now constitute the teaching service have a very different set of reasons in general for becoming teachers than their predecessors. They find their way to teaching through different entry pathways, are quite aware that they could earn more money in other occupations and are prepared to move on if their administration or principal does not support their efforts to become effective teachers (Ingersoll 2001, Johnson *et al* 2001a, 2001b).

Therefore it would seem that imperative that our education system invents new ways to rebuild the landscape of education in NSW state schools – old ways will no longer suffice. Much reform has been undertaken (for instance the implementation of outcomes-based education the new HSC, K-6 syllabus, the current rewriting of 7-10 syllabus, collegial education, restructure of the bureaucracy) and there is still more to do. One of these reforms involves the regeneration of teacher education and teacher professional development processes, referred to extensively in *Quality Matters – Revitalising teaching: Critical times, critical choices* (referred to from here on as *Quality Matters*). As we await the next stage of the review it is interesting to observe and discuss some of the recommendations that pertain to beginning teachers in NSW schools.

Welcome to the Real World

At this very time, throughout NSW, the graduates of teacher education programs find themselves in their first days and weeks of 'real' teaching. These initial experiences as a newly qualified practicing teacher, no longer labelled 'intern' or 'student' teacher, are the realization of a long term professional dream. Full of energy and enthusiasm, often accompanied by a sizeable HECS debt, our new teachers find their way around NSW state schools. Most have completed at least four years of preservice training in universities whose role it is to 'deliver efficient teacher education courses which produce competent teachers who are effective educators' (McCormack and Thomas 2001). Some are graduates of tailored retraining programs (for example the DET/Newcastle University/ BHP project) or recruits from interstate and overseas purposely acquired and prepared to teach in areas or subjects that the Department of Education and Training find difficult or 'hard to staff'.

Whilst most beginning teachers are 'new' to the schools they find themselves appointed to, they have spent countless hours as students, participants and observers in a variety of school

situations and settings, in what Lortie (1975) refers to as ‘an apprenticeship of observation’. During field experiences, practicums and internships they have gained invaluable teaching and learning experiences that may inform their first weeks and months of professional practice in their own classrooms. Ways of managing student behaviour and responding to student learning difficulties are also learned in these preservice experiences. When combined with advice and guidance specific to their new school culture and context, beginning teachers may construct a ‘pedagogy tool kit’ with which to develop and manage their own repertoire of teaching skills.

Many universities are now responding to demands for the provision of changed ways of teaching in the classrooms of tomorrow. At the University of Newcastle, teacher education students are gaining benefits from the fruits of current Australian research, aimed at improving both teaching practice and student learning outcomes. In 2001, first year *Professional Preparation* courses provided students with an understanding of *Productive Pedagogy for Outcomes Based Education* which included peer teaching, reflective journal writing and field experiences designed to develop effective teaching programs for improved student learning outcomes. Gore, Griffith and Ladwig (2001) discuss the application of the *Productive Pedagogy* theoretical framework in a fourth year course and its utilisation in schools during internship. As well as being applied to teacher education courses, the *Productive Pedagogy* framework is being discussed and used in professional development courses for experienced teachers who want to improve their practice.

Implicit with the development of any approach to teaching comes a new and often daunting set of responsibilities. The beginning teacher is now responsible and accountable for the planning and delivery of effective learning programs developed from prescribed syllabus, effective management of student behaviour and assessment and reporting of student learning outcomes. In many cases, beginning teachers are expected to be capable and efficient in these practices, with little guidance or training in how it is supposed to happen. Page, Marlow and Malloy (2000) report from one of their research participants the ‘expectations that principals and teachers expect the novice to be expert and competent from day one’ (p229). This can induce teacher stress and lead to a lack of confidence in new teachers.

Anecdotal reports from both preservice and beginning teachers tell of being advised to by their experienced colleagues and principals to ‘forget everything you learnt at the university- this is the real world’ only to be later told ‘you should know about this – you’ve been to university haven’t you?’. These statements serve not only to devalue the learning experience of the new teacher: they add to feelings of isolation and loneliness described by beginning teachers in their first weeks of appointment. As a respondent in one survey pointed out:

‘ I am young. I am new. I am too big for my britches. I am unaware of all the thousands of reasons that we can’t do this or that .. there is one of me with my enthusiasm and my beliefs’(Page, Marlow and Malloy p229).

Teacher Supply and Maintenance

Recent reports in the media have pointed to an impending teacher shortage in NSW state schools (*Daily Telegraph* 14-15/1/2002, *Sydney Morning Herald* 14-14/1/2002, *Education* 10/12/2001). As the current cohort of experienced teachers begins to retire a new generation of teachers is entering schools. Unlike the current teaching service, many beginning teachers do not see teaching as a lifelong occupation and expect to change jobs during their working

life. Teaching qualifications give the holder undeniable entry into many occupations such as retail, human resources and other fields of public service. As Ramsey observed:

‘teacher education graduates and many young teachers have skills, including higher order personal skills so critical in the profession, which are valued in the wider labour market. Teachers who contacted the Review believed their background as teachers strengthened their communication skills and their ability to deal with people’ (p40).

Unlike their predecessors beginning teachers are often unwilling to travel to areas outside of where they currently reside, let alone rural or isolated schools many hours from family, friends and a social life. Sometimes this unwillingness extends to those who are appointed to schools with reputations as ‘tough’ or ‘difficult’. Those who do accept appointments often find the going very hard and choose to end their first appointment soon after it begins or before they receive a transfer to a more favourable school or area. The fact that the staffing operation does not take into consideration factors such as current geographic, personal or cultural positions in their efforts to place beginning teachers does not auger well for the future of the profession. Beginning teachers are often the last to be appointed to NSW state schools, following the transfer of experienced teachers. Even those placed through the Graduate Recruitment program can find themselves in isolated or difficult schools.

Ramsey noted that waiting lists did not necessarily select the best teacher available at the time for a vacant position, being reflective only of how long a person had been ‘waiting’ for appointment. Ramsey goes as far as to recommend that the DET ‘abolish the waiting lists of people wishing to be employed’ and implement a policy that selects the best available applicant for the vacancy (p202). This would require not only a recognition of the changing landscape of teaching and the teaching service but also the renegotiation of the state wide staffing agreement with the NSW Teachers Federation.

The phenomenon of beginning teachers exiting the profession soon after their arrival is certainly not specific to NSW state schools. In an extensive study of teacher attrition and turnover in North American schools, Ingersoll (2001) analyses reasons for separation from the teaching service: ‘lack of administrative support especially for new employees’ (p9) is given by participants as one explanation for resignation. This reason, revealed by another North American report, was also referred to in an article by Leete (2001) in the NSW Teachers Federation journal *Education* ‘teachers who do not feel they are supported by administrators were often more likely to quit’ (p.2). Ingersoll also notes that

‘the age of the teacher is the most salient predictor of the likelihood of their turnover: the relative odds of younger teachers departing are 184% higher than for middle aged teachers’ (p17).

Past NSW statistics indicated one in six teachers exited the profession in the first two years of employment (Cross 1991 in Martinez 1994). Leete refers to a more recent and alarming set of statistics:

‘in the year 2000 the highest number of resignations were from (DET) teachers aged 25-29 years. While teachers in this age group make up a very small percentage of the current teaching service, the actual number resigning is far higher than for any other age group’.

Williams and Prestage (2000) refer to the UK experiencing high number of teachers leaving the profession in the first five years, citing lack of support for newly qualified teachers as a possible reason.

Induction of Beginning Teachers

The NSW Ministerial Review of Teacher Education, *Quality Matters* (Ramsey 2000) identified teacher induction as ‘the critical link between preparation and practice as a professional. Evidence to the review indicates that the link is not as strong as it could be’ (p 205). The evidence highlighted the lack of defined responsibility for induction with little clarity to the respective roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in the preparation and professional growth of teachers. It is interesting and perhaps relevant to point out that concerns about beginning teacher induction were raised in previous reviews of Teacher Education referred to in *Quality Matters*. Ramsey noted that in over two decades more than twenty reviews of teacher education had been carried out and that

‘no other profession in the nation has been the subject of so much enquiry, nor had so many recommendations made about it in terms of the preparation and education of its members as has teaching, yet made so little progress’ (p28).

Auchmuty (1980) raised concerns about induction stating that ‘beginning teachers should not be placed in schools or assigned to teach classes for which they are not prepared’. The matter of being placed in unsuitable schools or having to teach outside their qualified subject area was also revealed and discussed in Ingersoll’s study on teacher attrition (2001). In the review, Ramsey referred to Correy’s 1980 report *Teachers for Tomorrow* which suggested:

‘that there be at least 10 per cent reduction in the teaching load of teachers in their first year and a time reduction for teachers involved in supervision dependent upon the extent of their supervisory responsibilities’ (p30).

Ramsey also points out that Speedy made yet another observation a decade later of the same nature as Correy, ‘that schools and school systems review induction procedures with a view to increasing support to new teachers and reducing first year teaching loads’ (p30).

Although Ramsey commented on the high quality of induction and support programs in some NSW schools, it is also true that in some schools professional support for beginning teachers is intermittent, disorganized or even nonexistent.

‘Observations were made in advice about the sometimes poor quality of induction programs in which new teachers received inadequate support by way of supervision and mentoring. Cases were cited of teachers in their first appointment being escorted to their classrooms and largely left to make their own way, without guidance encouragement, counseling or active supervision.’ (p64)

McCormack and Thomas (2000) referred to this absence in their recent study of induction and support for first year physical education teachers ‘the evidence highlighted the defined lack of responsibility for induction with little clarity to the respective roles of all parties involved in the preparation and professional growth of teachers’ (p1).

Support for the Beginning Teacher

Zeichner and Gore (1990) state that policies, traditions, power and personalities work to construct a school culture that provides further challenges to the beginning teacher. In many instances these factors can 'make or break' a beginning teacher. This crucial element, the construction of a school culture and its effect on the new teacher, is being investigated in depth by Johnson *et al* (2001a) in *The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers* (from hereon referred to as *PNGT*) at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Their research suggests that

'the key to addressing teacher shortages lies not in recruitment policies but in support and training at the school site. For it is in schools and classrooms where teachers must find success and satisfaction. It is there they will decide whether or not to continue to teach' (p1).

New teachers struggled to put together their daily teaching plans with no long term guidance or planning. While mentors had been provided by the school district, there was little or no time for meetings or discussion. There were very few visits by colleagues and administrators to the new teachers class or staff rooms and limited opportunities to observe or team teach with experienced colleagues. The schools were not at all organized to help the new teachers cope with the demands of the curriculum or student management issues. In short 'neither the cultures nor the organisational structures of the schools were geared towards their need as novice teachers' (p2).

In their paper 'Counting on Colleagues: New Teachers' Experiences of Professional Culture' (Kardos *et al* 2001), the *PNGT* extends on the theme of professional support for beginning teachers in schools. When finding their way in their new schools, new teachers determine that 'it is the professional culture that will provide formal and informal information about how to teach and how to be successful in that school'(p1). A new teacher joins an educational culture that has defined norms and ways of doing things, shared memories and understandings. If the new teacher can 'attach' to or be mentored by an understanding and patient experienced teacher, the feeling of being isolated and alone can be minimized. Leete refers to a strategy in Washington State which has involved many school districts using fulltime 'veteran' teachers to do nothing but train teachers. Each experienced teacher is paid to help about twenty new teachers develop curriculum teaching methods and classroom management techniques (2001 p2). In other projects experienced colleagues in schools assist new teachers in understanding the culture and context of each school, assisting them to adjust and settle into their workplace.

In their research, Kardos *et al* sought to discover what kinds of professional cultures new teachers found in their schools, what were their initial and ongoing experiences and what role did the professional cultures play in the new teachers' successes in instruction, contributions to the school and attitudes towards their career in teaching. Theirs was 'a small and purposeful sample of first and second year teachers. However the respondents' accounts and appraisals are nonetheless provocative and informative. They can assist policy makers and practitioners in their current efforts to prepare for effective induction of a new generation of teachers' (p3). Following is a brief summary of *PNGT* findings on professional cultures in schools.

‘Counting on Colleagues’: Professional Cultures in Schools

This study addressed the preceding questions by interviews with fifty first and second year teachers in a wide range of Massachusetts public school settings- urban and suburban; elementary, middle and high and high schools; large and small conventional and charter schools. The researchers only looked at the professional culture through the eyes of the new teachers and while the viewpoints may be limited because of this, they are still important and must be given attention.

Findings

The PNGT study revealed three types of professional culture in schools:

Veteran-oriented professional culture: where the concerns and habits of experienced teachers determined professional interactions characterized by a high proportion of senior teachers whose patterns of professional practice were well established, attitudes ranged from friendly to cold, saw little or no need to interact with colleagues or discuss their work in depth, efficacy seen as ranging from confident, effective and efficient through to those who seemed tired of teaching and appeared to be biding their time until retirement. Veteran oriented cultures created no special place for the novice teacher and offered little in the way of professional support (pp3-4)

Novice-oriented professional culture: inexperience, youth and idealism prevailed. Professional interaction was ongoing and intense, though generally uninformed by the expertise and wisdom of veteran teachers. Schools typically staffed with very high proportions of new teachers. While the veteran-oriented culture provided no meaningful orientation or sustained induction for the novice, the novice-oriented culture at least welcomed the inexperienced teacher. However it provided little professional guidance on how to teach. Thus neither the veteran-oriented or the novice-oriented culture recognized and addressed the special needs of the novice teacher(p4).

Integrated professional cultures: new teachers said they were best served in these schools, were provided with sustained support and ongoing exchange across experience levels for all teachers: there were no separate camps of veterans and novices. Expert teachers understood the importance of mentoring their novice colleagues and often found that they themselves benefited from the exchange. All teachers were regularly engaged in deliberations about curriculum, instruction and their shared responsibility for students. Novice teachers found opportunities to develop their teaching, easy access to others’ classes, clear expectations and organized discussions about the needs of students and the improvement of practice (p4).

This research has been reported at length because of its resonance and relevance to NSW state schools. Little current evidence exists to support or refute the success of induction and mentoring nor a description or discussion of a professional learning culture in our state schools. The study by McCormack and Thomas (2001) referred to previously in this paper is

the most current available on induction and mentoring practices in NSW schools to this writer.

A previous report undertaken by the Training and Development Directorate (Carter, 1997) discusses the success of induction and mentoring programs in a sample of four NSW state schools, concluding that ‘ the directorate’s induction program identified best practice as involving the separation of the roles of mentor and supervisor’ (p1). Carter reported that of the nineteen beginning teachers in the four case study schools, those few who were contemplating a change were those who faced significant challenges in their work and whole school responsibilities, without the sustained support of a mentor or supervisor’ (p20). Reflective of the *PNGT* research, Carter states that:

‘cultures of professional collegiality and collaborative endeavour underpinned effective induction and mentoring practices in the case study schools .. in their most effective form induction programs and mentoring strategies were an outgrowth of these cultures of collegiality rather than self-contained programs existing separate from other programs in the school (p21).

Professional Support in Schools

The context and culture of the individual school can greatly affect whether the beginning teacher simply ‘survives’ their first year of teaching through ‘trial and error’ or ‘sink or swim’ techniques or becomes a professional learner in a professional development environment. Schools with well organized and planned induction programs operating in a culture of supervision and mentoring by experienced educators, inspired by an involved and enlightened principal, can make a difference to the effectiveness and maintenance of beginning teachers. In some schools the principal is seen as an administrative figurehead, concerned with facts, figures and the management of the school, appearing in the corridors or playground only to deal with meetings, complaints or difficult students. In others the principal is actively involved in daily routine, talking to teachers and students, often visiting or teaching a class as a method of developing a connection with the learning process.

Beginning teachers often see the involvement of the principal in induction and mentoring programs as the measurement of the school’s commitment to the professional learning culture of the school. Johnson *et al* (2001b) state that

‘The success of school-based induction programs hinges on how teachers work together, and the principal can play a central role in establishing faculty norms and facilitating interaction between and among teachers with various levels of experience’ (p3).

The aforementioned Massachusetts study on beginning teachers provided a great deal of information on the role of the principal, and important patterns about what the principal said, and did, concerning induction and support of new teachers. (p17)

The provision of professional support in schools then, can be a determining factor as to whether the beginning teacher succeeds or fails in their first year of teaching. Schools that provide a systematic and planned induction program, combined with effective supervision and mentoring, offer a supportive professional learning culture for the beginning teacher. Amongst a proliferation of successful North American induction and mentoring programs,

ongoing research such as is being undertaken by the *Project for the Next Generation of Teachers* at Harvard Graduate School and the *Seashore Pilot* and the *Bridge Model* at Seattle University are examples of successful projects that investigate and report on beginning teachers first years in schools. These projects seek to develop better support systems for first and second year students through a transitional process that will seamlessly connect pre-service preparation, beginning years of teaching and professional certification programs. Features include the pairing of novice teachers in a school or district, the processes of a cohort model and linkages between district and university work (Page, Marlowe and Malloy 2000 p232).

Carter (1997) reported that the issues uncovered in North American research were similar to those discussed with beginning teachers in Australian schools. New teachers express a need for strong support from principals and administrators in their professional learning specific to the culture and context of their school, mentoring from ‘a wise and trusted counsellor’, the development of collegial networks and the maintenance of a balance in their daily lives (Page, Marlow and Malloy, 2000, p229). Rather than stumbling from one classroom crisis to the next, new teachers need to have an organized and systematic approach to professional development and planning for teaching which prevents them having to spend inordinately long hours after school and at night just surviving their first term at school.

Professional Support in NSW State Schools

In the article ‘Why are young teachers leaving?’, Leete reports that the Department of Education and Training’s current commitment to teacher induction ‘consists of a half day of relief for each beginning teacher, with one day in the Western regions of the state and in western and south western Sydney. In addition the Department of Education and Training has produced a comprehensive “ring binder” kit to support teacher induction. The problem is without relief for the more experienced teachers with the responsibility for providing induction programs this kit is likely to remain on shelves’ (NSWTF 2001 p2). The issue here would seem to be then that more time and more funds are needed to provide successful induction programs in schools. Time and money available were also the factors associated with successful induction programs in the North American programs. At the same time research carried out by the *PNGT* revealed that even when time, money and resources were allocated to district mentor programs, interruptions and other commitments prevented the mentoring from happening.

So, it could be that a combination of commitment to professional learning and adequate funding makes the difference to successful induction programs. Certainly the NSW Department of Education and Training has invested a considerable amount of resources to beginning teacher support. The NSW Department of Education and Training provides a comprehensive ‘Induction of Teachers’ program as part of the Beginning Teacher Development Strategy. There are three levels of support in this strategy: State (through the Professional Support/Curriculum Directorate) District and school- based induction.

Professional Support/Curriculum Directorate

At State level, through the Professional Support/Curriculum Directorate (formerly Professional Development/Curriculum), Beginning Teacher Professional Support is a Key Priority for 2002. These strategies embrace developments such as the government's response to the recommendations of the Ramsey review and consequent implications for policy development; research initiatives including collaborations with universities to collect statewide data from beginning teachers on their experiences in teacher education, induction and professional development programs; in professional experience, to promote links between teacher education programs and schools to increase the number of professional experience places available to universities; to support induction, distribution of the 2002 edition of the *Induction of Teachers* resource in print and on-line and to publish a booklet *Information for Beginning Casual Teachers*.

State office also coordinates the *Certificate in Mentoring Teacher Development*, currently on-line in 20 districts with 86 participants. From 2002, it is projected that this program will expand across 40 districts, with participants having a role in developing induction and mentoring programs in their schools as well as updating their own professional and academic learning through research and writing. For many, this program of study will culminate in the award of a Master's degree or be included in doctoral programs. The *Certificate in Mentoring* represents a large capital investment in both beginning teachers and professional development by the DET and the fact that it is to be extended and ongoing with many of the participants' research projects being applied in schools, makes it a significant contribution to the support of beginning teachers.

Whilst it is true there is limited relief provided to schools for induction, principals and administrators who see induction as an important process often factor the cost of programs into their school management plans, with beginning teacher professional development embedded in a whole school professional development plan. The Department of Education and Training through the Professional Support/Curriculum Directorate also provides the expertise of numerous professional development, curriculum, and student welfare and equity consultant services through district offices. These consultants, part of whose role it is to support school staff, students and the wider community in their district, are available to serve the needs of beginning teacher programs in schools.

As a form of professional support for teachers in schools, the services of these highly trained and experienced consultant teachers can provide new appointees with information ranging from planning and delivery of a HSIE program through to the management of difficult or gifted and talented students. As an example, at the Tamworth District Beginning Teachers Induction in 2001, the following consultants presented information and services for beginning teachers: the Staff Welfare Officer, the Personnel Support Officer, the Aboriginal Education Consultant, the Assistant Principal: Behaviour and the Student/Services Equity Coordinator. This district is known for its exemplary beginning teacher programs, with a committed District Superintendent and senior staff throughout the district office and in schools who manage and coordinate beginning teacher strategies.

District Induction

The second level of support from the Department of Education and Training for beginning teachers is the District Induction. The District Superintendent issues a letter of welcome to each new teacher providing an orientation to the district and information on the district

induction program. The Professional Support/Curriculum Coordinator takes responsibility for a three phase induction program carried out to suit the specific needs of each district. The Professional Support/Curriculum Directorate recommends that the following topics be treated at district induction seminars:

Phase 1: The NSW Department of Education and Training

At the early stage of the beginning teacher's career, induction should focus on an introduction to the NSW Department of Education and Training and the principles on which education is founded. The video resource *Celebrating 150 Years of Public Education in NSW* and module 12 of the *Induction of Teachers* resource: *Department Organisation and Policies*.

Phase 2: Responsibilities of the Beginning Teacher

The next stage in the process of induction should focus on the beginning teacher's professional, legal, industrial and ethical responsibilities as an employee of the NSW Department of education and Training. The following modules of *Induction of Teachers* resource can be used for this purpose:

Module 5: *Professionalism and the legal responsibilities of teachers*

Module 6: *Assessment of the probationary teacher and progress towards the award of a Teacher's Certificate*

Module 24: *Ethics and Teaching*

Phase 3: Support for the Beginning Teacher

Support offered by the Department of Education and Training to its beginning teachers should form the focus of Phase 3 induction. Module 15: *Staff welfare and services* can be used for this purpose.

As an example, Tamworth District provided the above three phase induction in two professional development seminars: one half day session and one full day session in Term 1, 2001. The District Superintendent and Professional Support/Curriculum Coordinator presented the above information to beginning teachers and their supervisors in the first session and to beginning teachers only on the full day session. As previously discussed, the availability of district consultants to support the professional and welfare needs of beginning teachers was a feature of the full day session. A collegial network has also operated, facilitated by the Professional Support/Curriculum Coordinator and coordinated and managed by new teachers.

School-based induction programs

To complement these seminars, it is each individual school's responsibility to provide a school based induction program, as outlined in the *Induction of Teachers* Resource. It is important that the principal and senior school executive play a role in the planning and delivery of the induction program (see Ingersoll 2001, Johnson et al 2001b). The quality and application of school-based programs appears to be as diverse and inventive as the beginning teachers themselves and has been mentioned or discussed previously in this paper (see Carter 1997). An investigation of school based induction programs in NSW schools is long overdue and would make a worthwhile contribution to the study of professional support for beginning teachers in schools. A copy of the Professional Support/Curriculum Directorate's recommendation for school-based induction programs is attached to this paper. The DET is also trialling two Academic Associate positions to support school based induction programs.

The Academic Associate: Role and Operation

An initiative to support beginning teachers in NSW schools is the appointment to two school districts (Tamworth and Dubbo) of Academic Associates: Teacher Education, part of whose brief is to coordinate induction and professional support for beginning teachers in schools in conjunction with the Professional Support/Curriculum Coordinators. These appointments could be interpreted as a direct result of recommendations from *Quality Matters* and are indicative of the DET's commitment to beginning teacher professional support. Evidence to the Ramsey Review in terms of a reform agenda for teacher education, suggested 'making a significant number of conjoint appointments by universities and employers to strengthen connections between teacher education and schools' (p58). Rather than reproduce the nature and background of the position at length, a copy of the position brief is attached to this paper. A discussion of translating the 'theory' of the position into 'practice' follows. It is highly subjective at times but the intent here is to share with other education providers the day-to-day operation of the Academic Associate: Teacher Education in Tamworth District and at the University of Newcastle.

Early Days

In July 2001, I was appointed by merit selection to a new position within the Professional Support/Curriculum Directorate. This position, Academic Associate: Teacher Education, was established through a partnership arrangement between the NSW Department of Education and Training (Tamworth District Office) and the University of Newcastle. As discussed in the Working Paper (2001) partnerships have developed over the last decade between the DET and universities 'to facilitate the integration of the theory and practice elements of initial teacher and continuing teacher education' (p1). The project is seen as 'having a direct influence on the learning outcomes of students in rural schools through initial teacher education and ongoing professional development programs through the school/university partnership' (p2).

Day to day operations

One part of my role is to provide professional support for beginning and preservice teachers both at the university and in Tamworth District schools. During Terms 3 and 4, 2001, I traveled the district developing a familiarity with the geographical position of schools and building professional relationships with staff in schools and at the district office. It is crucial to the effectiveness of the position that principals and teachers have a say in how the position operates. It is by invitation to their schools that the potential to contribute to the development of professional learning cultures lies. It is pleasing to report that I have been made feel very welcome in the schools that I have had contact with and that I have developed sound working relationships with principals, executive staff and classroom teachers across the district. The support I have received from the District Superintendent and staff in district office has also been immensely helpful in understanding the culture and context of education in the district. This collegiality has been essential to introducing my position to schools and considering the workload of the people involved in these processes, greatly appreciated.

It has also been important to balance my time effectively to operate both on campus at the university and in schools in the district, which are geographically disparate. In Semester Two 2001, I taught two classes in the first year *Professional Preparation* course on Monday and Friday of each week. In the last week of the school term, I taught an intensive fourth year summer school, *Professionalism and Teachers Work*. I also presented seminars on classroom and student management, programming and planning to third and fourth year students undertaking practicums and internships in schools. As an extension of the *Professional Preparation* courses I coordinated field experiences in Tamworth District schools in liaison with other lecturers, the Professional Experience Unit, principals and cooperating teachers.

These initiatives directly related to the focus of the position in providing experiences for preservice teacher education students in rural schools. In evaluations of these field experiences, participants have commented on the value of the 'linkage' between the theory and practice of teaching provided by this particular school/university partnership. They have also commented that having their lecturer/tutors on site with them during the field experience has enhanced their understanding of how to link what they learn at the university to what they do in classrooms when teaching. The research and development implications of these statements are enormous but thoroughly worth the challenge of further investigation.

On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of each week, I make myself available to schools in the district to support the professional and sometimes personal needs of preservice and beginning teachers, their principals, supervisors and mentors. This support has ranged from simply being a good listener to beginning teachers who need to talk to someone 'outside' their own school situation, to planning and presenting information on mentoring and beginning teacher development at district seminars. Staff in district schools have expressed their interest in meetings and informal discussions in undertaking research both at schools and the university to enhance their understandings of current advances in pedagogy, outcomes based assessment and reporting and mentoring. In collaboration with the Professional Support/Curriculum Coordinator and university personnel, I look forward to the planning and delivery of professional learning experiences for promoting further tertiary study and research by staff in schools. These linkages, between Tamworth District and the University of Newcastle, provide an extremely 'fertile ground' for research in an academic context, considering the previous discussion concerning in-school support programs for preservice and beginning teachers. This research will form the basis of my doctoral studies.

Future Directions: The Year Ahead

In collaboration with my supervisors, school and district staff and State office I have formulated a management plan for 2002, a copy of which I have attached to this paper. There are three focus areas: Beginning Teacher Development, DET/University Partnerships and Research and Development in Beginning Teacher Support. The individual management plans describe outcomes, strategies, personnel involved, time lines and indicators of achievement. The tasks embraced by these plans is challenging but I consider it a great privilege to be involved in the reform and development of teacher education and professional learning in schools.

I also look forward to researching and writing the next stage in what I hope will become a series of papers that record the progression of my role as Academic Associate: Teacher Education. It is also important that these experiences are shared to show that new times need

different responses and so that other education providers may develop similar agreements. I see this project as ‘a work in progress’, which will change and grow according to the needs of the stakeholders in the partnership agreement. I believe the key to the success of this position is in being flexible and innovative in serving the needs of those involved.

Therefore I am reluctant to include a conclusion at this time. I have discussed the implications of *Quality Matters* and eagerly await the impending government response to its recommendations and directions for teacher education and professional development. The analysis and discussion of international research, particularly that of the *Project for the Next Generation of Teachers*, has provided a context for investigating teacher supply and maintenance through professional support strategies in schools and at universities. The context of induction and professional culture in schools has been explained with a suggestion to replicate research in professional learning cultures in order to identify what form of professional learning best supports beginning teachers at the school site. I have described what strategies are in place to support beginning teachers in the NSW Department of Education and Training and how my role as an Academic Associate: Teacher Education contributed to the professional learning and development of school staff. I have also explained my role in initial teacher education within the School of Education and how links are being created and extended between Tamworth District schools and the University of Newcastle in a variety of ways. In summary then, I have illustrated how the provision of professional support, ‘feet on the ground and running’ in schools and universities, can create links between the theory and practice of teaching and learning.

Further Research

- What are the experiences of beginning teachers in Tamworth district schools? (Interviews, letters, participant observer)
- What professional support is provided for beginning teachers in schools? (School based programs, mentoring, district support, collegial networks; survey, interview>analysis)
- Does this work for beginning teachers? Why/why not?
- Can the ‘Counting on Colleagues’ research be replicated to understand the current professional culture in schools?
- Beginning teachers/power/pedagogy/school reform: is the current professional culture facilitating/impeding change?
- What support can experienced colleagues provide for preservice and beginning teachers and what kind of professional development can support them (university courses (eg post-graduate studies), district courses (eg Team Leadership, Principal’s Preparation)
- How can the DET, the NSWTF and the universities develop a relationship that supports preservice and beginning teachers in their professional practice?
- How is teaching in a rural school different to teaching in an urban or isolated school?
- How do we prepare preservice and beginning teachers to teach in rural areas?
- How can we develop a relationship with staffing personnel to support beginning teachers?

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