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**Everything is Fine:
The experience of teacher induction**

Introduction

This narrative inquiry explores the experiences of a group of newly qualified primary school teachers in their induction year in Scottish schools. These teachers had completed the one year Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). In particular it addresses the issue of feedback on performance and the effect this has on those involved in the process. The argument put forward in this article is based on the notion that personal intelligence is central to effective relationships and therefore vital in the context of developing a successful mentoring relationship.

The interpretive, narrative approach used allows the submerged voices of new teachers to be heard. The success stories of teacher induction in Scotland are reported widely in the press and by those who administer the induction scheme. We wanted to share some of the less successful experiences, unlikely to surface in the official discourse.

The Context

A new scheme of induction was launched in Scotland as a result of recommendations in “A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century” (IEPCT, 2000). It is a formal, mandatory system of both support and assessment, which guarantees a one-year placement, with a reduced teaching commitment, for all Scottish teachers upon qualification. This support and

assessment is provided at school level by an induction supporter or mentor, with time set aside specifically for that purpose, although there is also an expectation that support for newly qualified teachers will be seen as a whole school responsibility (GTCS 2002). The reduced timetable (0.7 FTE) for the new teacher, and the time allocation for induction support in schools (0.1 FTE) is funded by the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED). Support is also provided by local authorities, through centrally organised staff development opportunities for newly qualified teachers, and their induction supporters. The induction scheme is overseen by the General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS), a self-regulating professional body which is ultimately responsible for the full registration of Scottish teachers. This one year induction period is still sometimes described as ‘probation’ and the newly qualified teachers are often referred to as ‘probationers’ or ‘probationer teachers’ The interest in teacher induction programmes in Europe (Huberman, 1993, Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002, Totterdell et al, 2002) and in the Asian-Pacific Rim (APEC, 2003) suggests that the experience of Scotland’s new teachers may be of interest outwith the UK. As others move towards more formal systems of teacher induction, it may be timely to scratch the surface of the new Scottish model in its first year of implementation.

We were interested in this major policy initiative on a number of levels. As former primary school headteachers, we were interested in the implementation of the new procedures. As teacher educators, we were interested in the expectations of current student teachers, as the first consumers of the new scheme. We wanted to explore the potential of the mentoring relationship and its impact on the success of the induction placement, especially in relation to feedback on performance. We had first hand experience of the emotional and professional impact of this important relationship on the success of student teachers during their school placements.

From our own earlier research into teacher induction (Rippon and Martin, 2003) we were also aware of the real concerns of final year student teachers about the impact of personal and professional relationships on the induction process. Difficulties could arise with colleagues, with a mentor figure, with peers or with school management. Students were particularly concerned about the approachability of the induction supporter (Martin and Rippon, 2003). This is reflected in other studies. (Bubb, 2000, Tickle, 1994, Williams and Prestage, 2002, Hobson, 2002, Feiman-Nemser, 2001) For this reason we wished to explore further the reality of new teachers' experiences, particularly in relation to the extent and quality of feedback in their probationary year.

Our Approach

Twenty-five students from our original student cohort (Martin and Rippon, 2003), volunteered to be tracked during this first induction year, thirteen of whom kept in touch by email. A core of ten of these new teachers, working in five, out of a total of thirty two, different Scottish local authorities, attended group interviews. The group met at key transition points in the induction year - October, December, March and June. The transcripts of these three-hour interviews, together with email contacts and our own field notes, provided the data for our study.

The group interview was used to gather the stories of the participants. This is a useful method of gathering rich data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of others (Patton, 1987). Merton, Fiske and Kendall (1990) argue that successful focused interviews are conducted with 10-12 people gathered in homogenous social or

intellectual groups. Our participants constituted such a group; linked by their educational background and their probationer status. They each held undergraduate degrees, had completed a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (Primary) and were members of the new induction scheme. All had completed their course to a high standard and this helped to minimise potential criticisms of feedback being attributed to negative outcomes. Their shared context proved to be conducive to openness and disclosure in the interviews.

The atmosphere in these interviews was important in terms of gathering authentic data. Their past professional connection with one another and with us as participants and professional studies tutor, allowed us to capitalise on a history of mutual trust and respect. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) recognise the importance of this close rapport with participants in creating possibilities for more informed research. There was a high level of trust and honesty, which made the interactions during group interviews comfortable and relaxed. The new teachers felt able to share experiences, good and bad. They seemed not to be distracted by the interview process itself and were able to focus on the situation under discussion.

Interview data was analysed for emerging themes after each focus group session and this analysis informed the selection of appropriate questions for subsequent sessions. In this way we were able to build the input of our participants into the process. Three significant issues were identified by the group – the importance of the relationship with the induction supporter, the quality and quantity of feedback, and the impact of being labelled “probationer”. These were major, recurring themes throughout the interview data. Using the interview transcripts, the three categories were manually colour coded. Both researchers coded the categories independently to moderate the process.

This article explores the first two of these themes. The data was used to create a fictionalised narrative, which is presented as a metaphor for the experience of the newly qualified teachers in our study, highlighting the key issues uncovered in the research. It introduces the main character, Pat, who is a newly qualified teacher, trying to make the best of her induction year, and her induction supporter, Ann.

The composite picture of Ann, the induction supporter, is based entirely on the perceptions of our participants and their experiences. We were aware of the unbalanced nature of this picture, but were limited to the data provided in the focus groups. The experience of induction supporters is clearly an area worthy of further research, but outside the scope of this study.

In order to test that our interpretation of the data matched the perceptions of those studied, we checked the verisimilitude of the piece with each of the participants. We felt we had gathered a fairly accurate picture of the experiences of the group from field notes, from interview responses, from observation. However it was important to share the story we created with the group to see if it resonated with their view of events. It was important that the text we created, seemed sensible and plausible to those whose stories helped create this view of the feedback process.

Sharing the Stories

This narrative has been created collaboratively with new teachers with a view to bringing about a change in practice. Pat's story explores the human dimension, rather than procedural dimensions of feedback in the induction process. We believe an emphasis on procedures is

not sufficient in making induction effective. Therefore we have chosen real events from our participants' stories to demonstrate the interplay of feelings in the mentoring relationship and its impact on the development of new teachers.

We aim to get at the real life of our participants, using an evocative and accessible medium. We have tried to create a story format which allows you to do that, whatever your viewpoint. You can sympathise with Pat and with Ann, her induction supporter. You can recognise the terrain for both probationer and induction supporter. In doing so, the narrative can speak for itself (Denzin, 1997).

“This new language, post-structural to the core, will be personal, emotional, biographically specific, and minimalist in its use of theoretical terms. It will allow ordinary people to speak out and to articulate the interpretive theories that they use to make sense of their lives.” (p26, Denzin, 1997)

An analysis of the narrative is included. Bertaux (1981), Goodley (2000), and Tierney (2002) advocate this approach. Barone (1995) and Clough (1992) argue that the process of analysis can undermine the voice of the participants and does the work of interpretation for the reader. We have attempted to do both, providing a self contained story, as well as an analysis, to maximise the impact of the narrative.

In reporting our findings we aim to tell the story of the ‘submerged voices’ in the Teacher Induction Scheme (Humes, 2003), in particular, the voices of those new teachers who have found relationships with their mentor and handling feedback to be problematic. Most of our participants were in this category. They were also very aware of the power relationships at

work in teacher induction and the pressure on them to conform and fit in. (Rippon and Martin 2003) This is especially so in view of the significance of their Final Profiles for full registration and future employment. Through Pat's story we hope to allow their voices to be heard.

It was our purpose to make the reader uneasy (Clough, 2002), as they think about the difficulties Pat, and the group of new teachers who were the inspiration for her story, faced. We recognise that the experiences of our group are not the only experiences of teacher induction in Scotland and make no claims to representativeness. We know of many good examples of support for newly qualified teachers, some of which have been reported in the press and in official evaluations. (TESS 2003, GTCS, 2003)

We invite you to read about Pat. We have made our agenda clear. We recognise the enormous improvement the new system of teacher induction represents and some of our group had very positive experiences to report, but, because of our data, we were unwilling to accept that all was well. There were times when we were disturbed by what we heard and it would be dishonest to pretend that we were unaffected by the accounts of the difficult circumstances facing some of our participants. On a professional as well as personal level, it was troubling to listen to the distress, frustration, anger or disappointment of these new teachers. This was part of the motivation to create an accessible account of their experiences.

We hope the story causes others to think about the induction experience of probationer teachers from a personal perspective, rather than a systems one. We cannot generalise our findings to the probationer teacher population. We simply lay this story before you as food for thought.

Pat's Story

“ Oh, we didn't know whether they were giving us a probationer or not – but I suppose they must have!”

Pat didn't quite know how to react. She felt like a gatecrasher at a party and the nerves she'd been feeling all the way to school on the bus were now turning into a cold trickle of sweat running down her back. Her 'new teacher' outfit didn't really feel that comfortable when she set off and it felt a lot less comfortable now. She wished someone else was in her shoes.

Despite this initially disconcerting start, Pat worked her way through that first day and got on reasonably well with the teachers in the school. They all seemed very nice and over the next few weeks she spent time in the staffroom trying to get to know everyone. She was good with people and generally got on well in new situations. Her degree was in computing science and she had loads of expertise, which her colleagues were quick to notice. Pat was generous with her time and energy and before long, she was well in with most of the teachers.

Ann Howard, the induction supporter she'd been introduced to in the first week, approached her sometime during the fourth week. Pat's head was still spinning from a particularly demanding day with her Primary 7 class.

“I've been so busy with all the things that have to be done at the start of term Pat and I know you'll have wanted time to get settled in anyway, so I've left you to your own devices so far. I hear you've been doing really well. I know there are lots of people on the staff who are very impressed with your abilities on the computer. But Mrs Butler has been asking me how

you're getting along so I think we should have a meeting. Apparently we're supposed to have regular meetings. How would it suit you to stay behind tomorrow after school and we can have a chat?"

"That would be really good. Thanks very much."

Pat went home happy that day. Her induction supporter was finally going to spend some time with her. All the way home on the bus she thought about what she'd like to talk to her about and resolved to get David, her partner, to help her make a list after dinner. She'd also be able to phone her mum and tell her that at last things were happening. Fantastic.

"Hello David – how's my darling daughter?"

"Well, Pat's not great actually. She's still not really had any help at school and she's worrying about whether she's doing things right or not. She says she thinks she's coping not too badly with the kids but she's worried that nobody's been in her class to see how she's doing. I've told her she'll just need to take the bull by the horns and approach Mrs Howard herself."

"So the mentor's still not talked to her then?"

"Well no. And it's worse because Lisa was on the phone twice this week telling her about all the things that are happening at her school. She's got some brilliant guy who's only been a

teacher for five years and is also a postgraduate. Lisa says he really understands what it's like for her and he volunteered to be her mentor because he thought he could help. He seems like really good guy and she's getting on with him like a house on fire. He's friendly and easy to talk to and she feels totally at ease with him."

"Oh dear."

"Yes, quite. And the thing is, Pat was much more confident about her teaching when they were out on school placement together. It's amazing how quickly that confidence is draining away. Anyway I can hear her coming up the drive. I'll go now. Don't say we've spoken. She'll probably be on to you later anyway, as usual."

"OK. Bye."

On the afternoon of the meeting, Pat and Ann both turned up in the staffroom feeling slightly apprehensive.

'Well Pat, I've got all the paperwork here and I've spent ages going through it all to make sure that I get this right. It's really important that this is all filled in correctly. We went through it all at the course I attended so it'll be fine.'

"Right"

"Well you seem to be coping just fine in the class – no problems there."

“Well I don’t know if I’d say that.”

“Nonsense. I’ve seen you taking them along the corridor and they’re fine. And whenever I pass your class, they’re all busy and everything seems calm. I think you’re doing very well for a probationer.

I think though we need to spend some time looking at resources so you know what’s in the school. I’ve got some information here for you that might help with that – Maths and Language resources and the topic outlines and resources for Environmental Studies. Would that be useful? I know when I started teaching I hated not knowing where everything was and what was actually available in the school to help me. So we’ll get all that sorted out. I don’t want you to be feeling that you’ve got to find all that out for yourself. I’m here to help you. And the other thing we need to talk about is these observations that have to be done. There have to be several of them over the year and so I think we should try and get one done before the October break. That’ll give you time to get settled first and me time to get organised. It won’t be anything to worry about. I’ll just come in and watch you do a lesson or whatever and then I can fill in the form. I hate these things but it’ll be fine.

I’ve had lots of students into my class over the years Pat and I’ve always done my best to support and encourage them. The part I hate about it is when the university ask for the report with assessment grades. You want the students to do well - you’ll know that Pat. I don’t want to hurt people’s feelings or seem critical.”

“I’m sure you’d never do that.”

“No well I’ll do my best. You and I will get along fine and if there’s anything you need help with, you just give me a shout. That’s what I’m here for.

Anyway I’ll need to get going because I’ve got to sort out reading resources for the Primary 5 classes and I promised they’d get them tomorrow.

So, is everything OK then. You’re alright?”

“Yes, I’m fine.”

“Well I’ll take you along to the resource room and I’ll leave you to get on with it.”

Pat stood alone in the resource centre, surrounded by topic boxes and maths equipment. She could hardly believe what had just happened. What was she going to tell David? They’d sat for ages last night working out a list of things she wanted to ask Mrs Howard about – and she’d said none of them. Not one of them. She felt stupid. She felt like a silly child, too scared to say things to the teacher. But she was the teacher. She didn’t feel like one. And what would her mum say? She was bound to phone tonight to see how it went. Oh God.

When Pat’s mum phoned that night to ask how the meeting had gone, Pat found herself unable to tell her mum much about Ann. When asked she didn’t know where Ann lived, anything about her family, her interests, her teaching, her attitude to probationers. She just felt that they’d gone through the motions of having the meeting but hadn’t actually connected in any way. And of course it was a major worry now that Ann was going to be coming into the class to observe her teaching. Pat knew that was on the cards but now that it had actually been arranged, it seemed much more real, just like when they got the date for the school visit from the tutor during the course last year.

Sometimes, she remembered, the feedback she’d received from some teachers was really useful. Other teachers, however, were strangely reluctant to tell her how she was doing and it wasn’t just her. Lots of her friends on the course had found the same thing. Often the first

time you knew what the teacher thought about your teaching was when she told the tutor about it on the visit. They seemed able to tell the tutor what they thought, when they had their meeting, but seemed less keen to tell the student. Maybe they were afraid they'd hurt your feelings or something. Pat thought it was all very strange. I mean whether the feedback was good or bad, it was better to know about it as soon as possible. If they left it to the tutor visit, it was often too late. If the feedback was good, it would have been good to get that boost to your confidence early on. And if it wasn't so good, it was still better to know so that you can do something about it. You wouldn't leave the children for that long without any feedback on their work.

So Pat tried to be optimistic about the observations and see them in that light. After all Ann didn't seem to want to talk about the work she was doing in the classroom and the observations would give them a good chance to do just that. Maybe it would be OK. She resolved to take that attitude and got on with it as best she could over the following few weeks. She would try to look forward to the observations and expect them to be a good chance for a useful conversation with an experienced teacher about how she was doing.

Pat was busy marking when phone rang.

“Hi It's Lisa. I'm almost frightened to ask but how are things going?”

“Well not bad actually. I’m up to my eyes in marking mountains of Primary 7 work, but other than that, things are better at school. It’s changing a bit. Interestingly I seem to be getting more practical help from the teacher next door - you know, Elizabeth, who had my class last year? I’ve been talking to her quite a lot in the staffroom and I often end up in her classroom after the children have left just to have a chat. She’s really nice and she’s got Primary 6, just a year younger than mine, so there’s loads she can help with. When I get my time out of class, she even lets me come in and watch her in action. It’s great – she makes it look easy and best of all, she’s always happy to discuss what actually happened in the class and why, so I feel I really learn when I go in next door. It’s exactly the kind of conversation that helps - we really get into the detail of what went well and why. She talks about herself as though she’s still learning and I don’t feel stupid after I’ve been with her, I feel as though I can maybe do this. Actually I think Elizabeth is the reason I remain sane. She makes a real difference to how I feel about going to work in the morning.”

“See, I told you the other teachers can be a really good help too. It’s not all down to the induction supporter. Anyway you sound much happier and I was just about to come round with a bottle of wine to cheer you up. You obviously don’t need it now!”

“You’ve got to be joking. That would be really nice. See you shortly.”

“OK. Put that marking away and I’ll be there in half an hour.”

Ann wasn't really in the frame in the same way as Elizabeth. She seemed like she was the person whose 'job' it was and, to be fair, she did regularly ask Pat how she was doing. However, she never really seemed to be that interested in the reply. She gave Pat lots of 'stuff' to help her and kept her well informed about school policies and procedures. She made sure she knew about all the probationers' courses that were on offer and organised all sorts of opportunities to learn in other places. For example Pat went to Elizabeth's class, into the nursery, and visited the high school. All that was very useful and Pat learned lots from it, but the relationship with Ann was pretty superficial and not one that Pat saw as key to her development, even though it could be the key to her full registration.

Ann Howard was senior teacher at the time of Pat's appointment and had a history of being responsible for student teachers. However, following her first training session, she had gone home in a complete panic about what was expected of her. She was apprehensive about the extent and nature of the proposed role. Specifically she was worried about the assessment side of things. Against this background, Ann was very concerned when she learned about the dual support and assessment role of the induction tutor. On the course there had been a huge amount of time spent on filling out the forms and making sure every probationer received their entitlement to support and feedback. It didn't feel much like the old system, keeping an eye on the probationer that she'd done many years before. Then she just told them to drop in when they needed some help and she had always felt able to offer practical assistance. Now, with these observed sessions and recorded meetings and forms for everything, she felt like she was taking on more than she was trained for and more than she had intended.

The observed session was a Maths lesson and Pat had prepared it thoroughly. She had tried to anticipate every eventuality and felt like she was having a “crit” again – the dreaded tutor visit to observe teaching. At 9am Ann sent up a note to say that she wasn’t going to be able to come at 9.30am as planned, but that she would definitely be there after the interval at 11 o’clock. This meant that the lesson she had so carefully prepared with the Maths set couldn’t now be the observed session. Obviously she had her whole day prepared and could carry on with the language block after the interval, but it wasn’t the same. She felt slightly thrown, but tried not to show it.

Ann appeared at her door.

“I’m so sorry about the change of plan. I’m afraid it was a bit of an emergency but I’ve got it covered now so we can go ahead. Are you OK with that? I suppose it doesn’t really matter which part of the day it is – one lesson’s much the same as another for this kind of thing.”

“Of course, it’s no problem,” Pat heard herself saying.

The language block went fairly well with no disasters. Ann sat at the back of the class and took lots of notes. Pat didn’t see her smile once and wondered how she was doing. At the end Ann said she’d write up her notes and they could discuss them at the next meeting, later in the week. Although she would dearly have loved feedback there and then, Pat said that was fine.

When she went home that night, Pat spoke at length to her mum on the phone. She didn’t normally phone her mum that much, but since the probation year had started, she seemed to

be never off the phone. David was on an office night out with the bank, so she told her mum the whole story.

“I can’t believe she just changed it like that with no real notice and then just expected me to carry on with a completely different lesson. Did she really think I’d not have spent ages preparing it? And then she just sat at the back and it was exactly like being back on the course – another “crit” – and I thought I’d finished with that feeling. I remember thinking it’ll be different now that I’m a real teacher and not a student, but it wasn’t. Now I’m terrified to get the feedback and I wish she’d just put me out of my misery and told me today that I’m hopeless.”

The second meeting began with the minutes of the first, which were duly agreed and signed. Then to the issue of feedback on the observed session – the part they were both concerned about.

“You were fine Pat, you have nothing to worry about. You’re managing just fine and I’m pleased to say I don’t have anything negative to say about your teaching. You’re well prepared and working hard and that’s the main thing.”

With that Pat felt a mixture of relief and disappointment. Yes she was glad to be told everything was OK – but she was a probationer and there must have been something she could have improved. She certainly didn’t remember doing any ‘perfect lessons’ when she was a student a few short months before. She had grown to appreciate constructive criticism

of her work and was now keen to get feedback which would help her to improve. She particularly wanted feedback on her ability to manage the children's behaviour, but when she asked Ann about this she said she didn't know what she was worrying about – everything was fine.

This established the pattern for the rest of the year:

Ann

arranged things

identified resources

organised observations

told Pat everything was fine

filled in an interim report in December to that effect and both signed it.

By then Pat had become more cynical about the whole process. She no longer looked for real help from Ann but turned instead to Elizabeth, her friends, who were probationers, and to other teachers on the staff with whom she felt she could connect. They helped her with the things she was really concerned about, listened to her fears, gave her detailed feedback, made her feel human.

Pat completed her probation year successfully,

All the observations done.

All the meetings arranged.

All the forms filled in.

All the boxes ticked.

Fine.

The Key Issues

There are clearly problems for both Pat and Ann in this story. Both are trying to do their best, but in the absence of any real guidance about the emotional dimension of the relationship and the interpersonal skills required, they are both struggling to a certain extent. This is not due to lack of effort or willingness on either side, but rather to lack of understanding and specific skills. Pat feels frustration at the lack of detailed feedback and genuine empathy and seeks support elsewhere. Ann feels slightly overwhelmed by the increased demands being made on her to be more rigorous in her assessment of probationers and reverts to a fairly mechanistic response. Neither is wrong in itself. There is no reason why other teachers in the school and colleagues outside school should not provide a strong support network for newly qualified teachers. Nor is there any reason why an induction supporter should not identify resources and organise learning opportunities as described in the story. We argue, however, that opportunities are being missed to develop the kind of productive, learning relationships which could evolve from the new structures put in place to offer support to new teachers. The key to this more fruitful relationship, involves an open and honest communication and an understanding of the emotional dimension of handling feedback.

Discussion

Skill in Handling Feedback

Part of the support remit for induction supporters includes being responsible, in the new scheme, for formal assessment of the progress of probationer teachers over the course of the year. These arrangements are formalised as an entitlement for every new teacher to receive appropriate time and support during the induction placement. This shift has resulted in the post of induction supporter carrying increasing power and responsibility. This responsibility lies heavily on the shoulders of Pat's induction supporter, Ann. On one level she has to recognise the rights of the probationer to be treated with respect and trust and to be given effective feedback, honestly and sensitively. On the other level she has a duty to give constructive feedback. On both levels there is a responsibility to meet the requirements of the system to allow the probationer to fulfil the Standard for Full Registration.

We argue that the best way to achieve this balance between support and assessment is through appropriate staff development. The aim would be to increase the awareness and understanding of the importance of the quality of the relationship, the attitudes and behaviour of those involved and the interpersonal skills required. We recognise that the dynamics of this new relationship between the probationer and the induction supporter determine the social reality of the probationer teacher's induction placement and argue that personal intelligence will be a significant factor.

We have experience of a similar dilemma for teachers in school experience placements, where the requirements of support and assessment are equally challenging. We have met many teachers who are reluctant to give face to face feedback to students, particularly when there is a cause for concern. They have not been trained, nor have effective experience to handle such critical feedback and are naturally concerned about the wellbeing of the recipient. The balance of courage and consideration required here is a difficult one to achieve. It is not always achieved by chance.

Gardner's work is helpful here in understanding the underlying problem. He identified personal intelligence within his theory of multiple intelligences (1983). For the purposes of this article, the focus is on the two personal intelligences he identified – interpersonal and intrapersonal.

Interpersonal intelligence *"denotes a person's capacity to understand the intentions, motivations, and desires of other people and, consequently to work effectively with others."* (Gardner, 1999 p.43) This would include the potential to read others' moods, including non-verbal messages, and the ability to empathise with the feelings of others.

Intra personal intelligence *"involves the capacity to understand oneself, to have an effective working model of oneself – including one's own desires, fears, and capacities – and to use such information effectively in regulating one's own life."* (Gardner, 1999 p.43) This kind of self-knowledge and awareness is closely connected to the capacity to then relate to others.

The concept of emotional intelligence, popularised and developed by Goleman, (1995) stems in part from Gardner's work. Goleman differentiates between intellectual and emotional

intelligence and makes a similar distinction between personal and social competence. He adapted Mayer's model (Salovey and Mayer 1990) and identified five basic social and emotional competencies: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. For the purposes of this study, three of these are particularly relevant:

- *self awareness* - knowing our feelings and using them to guide decision making: having a realistic sense of our own abilities and self confidence
- *empathy* – sensing what people are feeling, being able to take their perspective, cultivating rapport with a wide range of people
- *social skills* – handling emotions well in relationships, accurately reading social situations, interacting smoothly, using these skills for co-operation and teamwork

The two dimensions of emotional intelligence, personal and social, are related, and this awareness of one's own and others' feelings, needs and concerns, as well as skill at handling them, seem to be particularly relevant to this study. Whilst Pat's induction supporter is very well intentioned and well prepared in terms of the procedures, she lacks awareness and skill in this important area. The training she has received has concentrated on the mechanics of the process of induction and has left her unaware of any shortcomings in her approach. She is reticent about giving what she perceives to be 'negative' feedback and is concerned about the possibility of hurting Pat's feelings. She doesn't see the importance of the detailed, specific and honest feedback needed by a novice teacher to develop her skills in teaching. She feels ill equipped to handle the situation without possibly causing offence and so avoids confrontation.

A second key premise, which is useful in identifying possible solutions, is that emotional intelligence is not fixed and can be developed in the light of experience and understanding (Goleman, 1998). People can increase their own self-awareness and explore the values which underpin their perceptions. They can learn to interact differently with one another and improve the effectiveness of their communication (Covey 1998, Gillen 1992). Appropriate personal development opportunities are helpful in the process. Unfortunately, neither Ann nor Pat experience any such opportunities for reflection on the process of communication, exploration of attitudes in this difficult area of feedback or the development of relevant skills (e.g. through role play).

These perspectives on personal intelligence and its potential development provide a lens through which to view the experiences of our participants in relation to feedback on their performance during induction. The interpersonal skills of both probationer and induction supporter are important determinants of the success of the process for the individuals involved and the resulting professional development of both parties.

The key to the induction supporter's success in this area is genuine personal interest in the person being guided; empathy and understanding; trust and respect. Goleman (1995) argues that artful critique should require the appraiser to be specific, offer a solution, be present and be sensitive – showing an awareness of the possible impact of the criticism. This is very different from making sure that all the forms are filled in. This consideration needs to be balanced by the courage to give feedback which may be difficult to receive, but which is necessary to grow and develop. (Covey 1998)

Pat felt she received little feedback of this nature from her induction supporter, although she felt it was exactly what she needed. There was a lack of real understanding on both sides of the skill base required to handle feedback effectively. This led to an unsatisfactory outcome for both parties, personally and professionally. Both seem to be struggling to understand the complex set of skills required for the mentoring relationship to be a success and neither is offered appropriate development opportunities to address the problem.

Tickle (2000) focuses on the importance of a humanist perspective on the induction process which, he argues, can be lost if there is too strong an emphasis on “*managing*” the process. He argues the case that personal development literature is useful in exploring self awareness, empathy and the social skills required to build the kind of safe and supportive relationships within which feedback can be given and received with confidence. It may be that there is an over emphasis in Pat’s situation on the management of the process of induction and singular lack of attention to the human dimension.

Conclusion

The story of Pat’s induction year raises the issues of how feedback can go wrong and the discussion which follows it suggests a number ways in which we might improve the induction process for newly qualified teachers who find themselves in a similar position. There are clear implications for the training and support of induction supporters. We have written elsewhere about the types of training which might be useful to staff who take on the responsibility of the post of induction supporter: a strong focus on interpersonal skills, less concentration on mechanics of induction and more on the process itself, specific guidance in giving feedback. (Martin and Rippon 2003). This approach to induction supporter training would be more likely to facilitate the kind of dialogue, so obviously missing in Pat’s

situation. Many induction supporters are working extremely hard to do their best by probationer teachers, but have had insufficient support and guidance themselves.

However a dialogue requires two participants, and there is also a responsibility on the part of the new teacher to play their part in the process. The lack of input from probationers in this supposed dialogue is highlighted in Pat's initial meeting with her induction supporter. Given the power relations involved in the situation, it may be challenging for new teachers to exert much influence. Nevertheless they should be supported in training, both in induction and in Initial Teacher Education to seek out constructive criticism, reflect upon it and act appropriately in response. A degree of mutual respect required in the relationship for it to be successful and support and guidance is needed on both sides. There are implications here for both local authorities and Higher Education Institutions. Practice in Initial Teacher Education should take account of the need to develop these skill in student teachers.

We recommend a different approach to staff development in this important area of teacher induction. In addition to the existing, important emphasis on the correct procedures, we advocate a much longer term, on-going, joint staff development programme involving new teachers and their supporters, where the emphasis would be firmly on the interpersonal skills involved in the mentoring relationships. This requires a much more interactive methodology, including role play, modelling and coaching, which would allow participants to explore the emotional dimension of handling feedback on performance. The skills of the trainer are equally important, as they lead participants on a journey which is potentially much more demanding than the assimilation of a new set of procedures. This kind of staff development requires a much deeper analysis of the dynamic of mentoring and the emotional dimension which we ignore at our peril. A programme such as this would stand a much greater chance

of success in addressing the issues raised in Pat's story. This difficult area requires careful handling and should not be left to chance, after the system requirements have been met.

The stories of some of our participants disturbed us and the rest of the group, compelling the creation of Pat's story. It was our intention that Pat's story would move the consciousness of the TEIs, local authorities, GTCS, induction supporters and probationers in response to those new teachers, like Pat, whose negative experiences of feedback impact on their induction year. We conclude with our recommendations to act upon supporting the feedback process by recognising the personal, emotional dimensions involved and the need to develop personal intelligence as a matter of professional responsibility on all of us involved in new teacher induction.

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