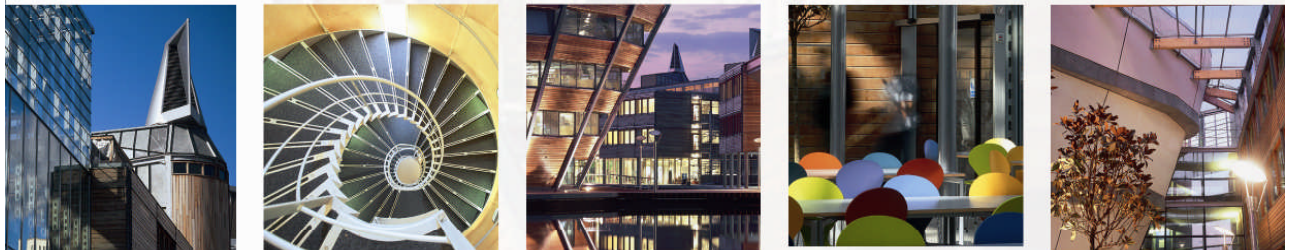
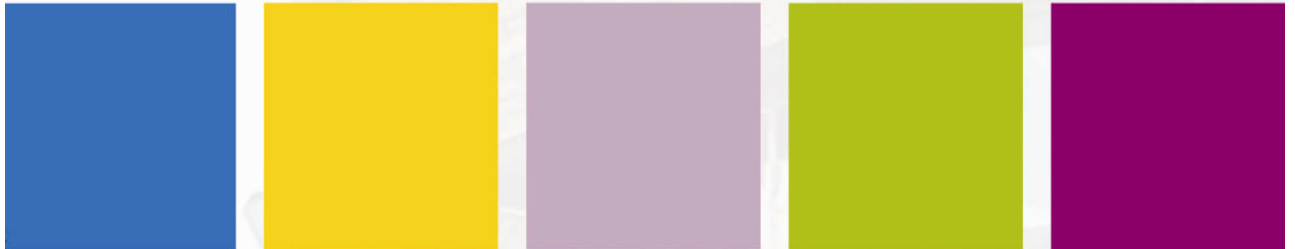




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Teaching: no longer a life-long profession? The effects of workload on the commitment and retention of a new generation of teachers

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Abstract

This paper draws on original empirical case study data to examine the experiences of 18 hard-to-recruit beginning teachers of secondary modern languages in England over a three year period. The research analyses their motivation to teach, the effects of workload and early promotion upon their work-life management and association between these, and their commitment to the profession. The teachers' differing views of the trajectories of their teaching lives identified them as 'classroom', 'career' or 'portfolio' oriented. Although these signalled differences in their career aspirations, all expressed concerns about the negative effects of workload upon their intentions to remain in the profession. This was especially the case for vocationally oriented and portfolio teachers. The paper thus makes an original contribution to the understanding of the effects of early promotion on the rates of premature attrition amongst new teachers and raises issues for policy makers and headteachers concerned with teacher retention.

Introduction

The present study aims to 'give voice' to the new generation of beginning teachers at a time of well-documented pressure in their career (for example Gold, 1996) as it examines their motivation to teach and the effects of work-life management on their commitment to the profession. The research analyses empirical data from the perspectives of three consecutive cohorts of six newly qualified teachers [NQTs] of modern languages teaching in secondary schools in England, a subject with a noteworthy shortage of teachers at the time (OFSTED, 2002). It addresses the following questions:

- why do beginning teachers choose this career?
- why do they seek to leave teaching?
- how do they manage work-life balance?
- how do they view longevity in teaching?

The analysis of qualitative data sheds light on key issues in retention as these beginning secondary teachers reflect on their experiences and seek to locate themselves within the 'low trust, high surveillance culture' of the teaching profession (Graham, 1999a: ix). The

international literature on the changing nature of teachers' work highlights intensification of teachers' work and points to increased governmental control over education as a means of raising standards of education in schools. There is considerable evidence that such centralised educational reform has fundamentally altered the nature of teaching by diminishing the degree of autonomy and fulfilment experienced by teachers (for example Fullan, 2001; Hargreaves and Evans, 1997). As teachers' work is intensified, diversified and rendered less attractive than other professions which are said to 'offer more creative space, better rewards and less stress' (Graham, 1999b: 89), retention of teachers has become a serious concern in many nations. UNESCO (2003) attributed the 'crisis' of teacher shortages to budgetary cuts, 'chaotic working conditions', 'stress and burnout'. In England the quest for efficiency and productivity in education is reinforced by policymakers, for example the former Minister of State for Schools David Miliband (2003), with a range of incentives which target increased accountability and performance, thus intensifying teachers' work and increasing levels of stress.

A great deal of quantitative data has been produced about the teaching force, and to some extent the 'solutions' to the teacher shortages from the mid 1990s (for example OFSTED, 2002, 2003; EURYDICE, 2002) are a result of analysis of quantitative data such as increases in teacher numbers, the imminent demographic downturn in secondary age pupils, and the slight increase in pupil: teacher ratio since the 1980s (DfES, 2003a, 2004). The 'crisis' of teacher shortages has been disputed as 'largely mythical' (White et al., 2006: 325), and rather a case of increased demand as a result of increased funding and reduction of class sizes, with any shortages restricted to specific regions and subjects (See et al., 2004; Gorard et al., 2007). The government funded Training and Development Agency for Schools, [TDA] has recently reported more stable recruitment and falling pupil numbers (BBC News, 2005), but White and Smith (2005) have noted greater international concern over teacher turnover as opposed to shortage. In response to concern over teacher retention, in 2001 the UK government commissioned auditors PriceWaterhouseCoopers to undertake a Teacher Workload Study which reported that although the annual workload of teachers and headteachers compares with that of 'other comparable managers and professionals', the working weeks of teachers and headteachers are more intensive. The report's essential recommendations sought to 'reduce teacher workload' and achieve 'improved teacher morale and better retention rates' (PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2001: 2). In response, the government

established the National Remodelling Team [NRT] in 2003 (subsequently integrated within the TDA in March 2005) to undertake a 'workforce remodelling' initiative to improve retention by reducing workload via 'a concerted attack on unnecessary paperwork and bureaucracy' (NRT, 2003). The right of all teachers in England and Wales to 'enjoy a reasonable work-life balance' is now enshrined in the national agreement *Raising Standards and Tackling Workload* (2003: 6).

In her study into the experience of teaching in England, commissioned by the TDA, Morgan (2005) reported that more teachers (44 percent) regularly experienced 'natural highs' or 'optimal flow experience', characterised as concentration, enjoyment, motivation and absorption in a task, than those working in 'comparable careers' (34 percent). Morgan reported that teachers find their work 'fulfilling, exciting, and extremely varied' (2005: 7). However, if teaching is in truth so rewarding, then powerful negative factors must account for teacher attrition.

Research undertaken in England into teachers' reasons for leaving the profession reported five main factors underpinning attrition, in the following order: 'workload, new challenge, the school situation, salary and personal circumstances' (Smithers and Robinson, 2003: i). These findings corroborate those of Market and Opinion Research International [MORI] whose survey to all serving teachers in England in 2002 established that:

- 56% of the 70,000 respondents cited workload as the greatest demotivation;
 - 'initiative overload, a target-driven culture and pupil behaviour' were key demotivating factors for approximately one in three teachers;
 - one third of respondents did not expect to be teaching in five years' time.
- (MORI, 2003: 5)

The first five years of service as a teacher is a particular focus for retention, as one in five NQTs reportedly leaves the profession before their fourth year of teaching (MORI, 2003). In a female-dominated profession this figure is likely to hide women taking a career break for childrearing, who might return later (White et al., 2006). As the retention focus sharpens on beginning teachers, a literature is

developing which sheds light on the new generation of teachers, suggesting that new teachers today have an unprecedented level of career choice. They might choose to stay in the teaching profession with its intense workload, demands and competition, or alternatively reject the workload and pressure of previous generations and experienced colleagues and move on to another career, which again might be temporary (for example Dwyer and Wyn, 2001; Johnson et al., 2004; Mayer, 2005).

The present study draws on original empirical case study data to examine the early career experiences of 18 hard-to-recruit beginning teachers of secondary modern languages in England. Qualitative information about the first few years in the teaching career from the new teachers' perspectives is presented in order to understand the issues behind the quantitative data held on the teacher workforce.

Methodology

The study aims to examine the impact of the experience of the first years of teaching on motivations and expectations. As the first year of the study coincided with the introduction of statutory induction in England, three consecutive cohorts allowed for induction procedures to become more embedded. The participant NQTs responded to a survey as part of a university support programme for secondary NQTs in a range of subjects during their first year of employment following qualification, the induction year (year 1). The survey provided predominantly quantitative data; however, some questions elicited qualitative comments, which were coded manually in order to establish frequency of occurrence. From the survey of approximately 150 respondents each year a purposive sample within modern languages was devised which reflected the gender imbalance of the secondary modern languages teaching force and gave a range of attitudes towards the process of induction into the profession, from those whose experience of induction was positive to those whose experience was negative or changed during the first year. Half of the sample teachers were career changers, and were thus able to compare their experiences with other employment. For the case studies (six modern languages NQTs in each of three consecutive cohorts), a qualitative approach was adopted as a means of investigating rich data which would illuminate, describe and explain the perspectives of beginning teachers on their early career experiences. The qualitative data were collected through

written reflections and semi-structured individual interviews, which were recorded and subsequently transcribed. The interviews returned to themes explored in their reflections, extended some issues, and included new avenues. Key themes explored were induction year experiences, attitudes to teaching, learning, pupils and colleagues, work-life balance and career aspirations.

Cohort	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003
X Year 1 1999-2000	Attitudinal survey on experience of induction End of Year 1	Written reflections x6 (mid and end of each term) Interviews x2 (end of term 1 and term 3) Year 2	Year 3	Written reflections End of Year 4
Y Year 1 2000 - 2001		Attitudinal survey on experience of induction End of Year 1	Written reflections x3 (end of each term) Interviews x2 (end of term 1 and term 3) Year 2	Written reflections End of Year 3
Z Year 1 2001-2002			Attitudinal survey on experience of induction Year 1	Written reflections x3 (end of each term) Interviews x2 (end of term 1 and term 3) Year 2

Table 1 Organisation of data collection

The organisation of data collection within the longitudinal study (Table 1 above) permitted an initial exploration of themes identified in the survey analysis. This was an iterative process which highlighted emerging themes: vocation, early notions of career, impact of workload and experiences of induction on beginning teachers' motivation. Preliminary analysis of the data was manual, working with notes taken

during data collection, and generated emerging themes and initial coding. Initial categories were subsequently refined, combined and modified with the analysis of new data and comparison across cases. Concepts which emerged from the initial data informed the subsequent design of the study. The second stage of vertical analysis considered the greater depth of issues in transcribed interviews and written reflections. The later stage was 'horizontal' or 'comparative' analysis which sought to compare and establish commonalities and differences across cases (Miles and Huberman, 1994). From this grounded analysis of new teachers' perspectives on their experiences, constructions of identity and projected and actual career trajectories in the first years in teaching, a relatively stable threefold typology of teachers emerged of 'career', 'classroom' and 'portfolio' teachers. 'Career' teachers are defined as those who are committed to teaching as a long-term, permanent career with remunerated promotion. 'Classroom' teachers are not ambitious for promotion; they are committed to teaching, but not necessarily as a permanent, full-time career. 'Portfolio' teachers consider teaching as a short-term profession within a 'portfolio of careers', all of which may be temporary (Handy, 1989). Table 2 shows the sample NQTs in the three cohorts.

Cohort	Pseudonym	Age at beginning of induction year	Teacher type:	Career changer	Induction Rating (2 scores denote change from mid to end of year). (-- = very negative + = positive)	Career Progression (Y= Year)
X Year 1 1999- 2000	Liz	23-25	Career		- to ++	Y2 promotion, change of school Y4 promotion, change of school
	Nina	26-30	Classroom	✓	++	Y5 promotion
	Kate	23-25	Portfolio		+ to --	Y3 change of school and phase (to primary)
	Carl	30-35	Portfolio	✓	-	Y3 promotion, change of school Y5 promotion
	Anna	26-30	Career	✓	++	Y4 promotion Y5 relinquished promotion
	Ellen	26-30	Career	✓	-(-)	Y2 promotion Y7 promotion, change of school
Y Year 1 2000 - 2001	Amy	23-25	Portfolio	✓	+	Y3 left to have children
	Laura	23-25	Career		--	Y4 promotion, change of school
	Rebecca	23-25	Career		+	Y3 promotion Y5 promotion, change of school
	Charlotte	26-30	Classroom	✓	+(+)	Part-time
	Heather	36-40	Classroom	✓	+	Part-time
	Amanda	26-30	Career		++	Y2 temporary promotion Y3 permanent promotion
Z Year 1 2001- 2002	Nadine	23-25	Portfolio		+	Y3 maternity leave
	Ariane	26-30	Classroom		+ to --	Y2 supply (secondary/primary), changes of school Y3 retrained for primary, changes of school
	Jackie	23-25	Portfolio		++	Y4 promotion
	Ruth	23-25	Career		-	Y2 promotion Y3 promotion Y4 promotion, change of school Y5 promotion relinquished, change of school Y6 further promotion
	Rachel	23-25	Career		+	Y3 promotion Y4 change of school
	Tim	36-40	Classroom	✓	+	Y2 permanent supply, change of school Y4 permanent post, promotion, change of school

Table 2

NQT case study sample

The induction rating shows NQT perceptions of their induction year. For Kate and Ariane their experience became more negative as the year progressed. The career progression shows early promotion and movement between schools. Liz had changed her school twice by year 4, on both occasions being promoted. Others gained promotion in their original employing school. Whilst the small case study sample cannot claim generalisation across all secondary NQTs in England, the teachers' voices reported here do provide valuable insights into a range of issues experienced in new teachers' work at a time when 'teachers in many schools perceive a lack of control and ownership over their work' (PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2001: 1).

Staying in teaching

The systematic literature review of Edmonds et al. (2002) concluded that teachers are primarily attracted to teaching as a career by intrinsic motivators, for reasons of intellectual satisfaction and in order to make a contribution to society. In the present study key factors contributing to the new teachers' job satisfaction were consistent with other research (Hobson et al., 2004; Morgan, 2005) and highlighted the appeal of intrinsic rewards: working with young people, pupils' learning, rapport with pupils, improved teaching, relations with colleagues, feeling part of a team and enjoying autonomy at work (in order of frequency). All but two teachers of the eighteen had entered the profession with a sense of vocation. However, the desire to 'give something back' was most often articulated by 'career' teachers:

I might complain about long hours and the behaviour but ... that is a vocation and I think that's important and I don't think you can pay people to think that, it's either there or it's not...I don't want to work in business... I want a vocation, basically, I want a vocation and I think teaching's the best place to have that. (Ruth, term 3 year 2)

I enjoy contact with young people and sharing ideas with them. I love languages and helping others to learn them, I wanted to do a job which 'gave something back' to the community and help others who didn't have the opportunities I had myself. (Anna, term 1 year 2)

When it's good it's the best feeling - being in a classroom with young people enjoying learning French! (Liz, term 1 year 2)

I enjoy teaching languages, but enjoy contact with young people above the subject itself. (Ellen, term 3 year 4)

All 'career' and 'classroom' teachers and three of the five 'portfolio' teachers would have chosen to teach again, however, positive experiences of working with colleagues were key influences on the desire of 'career' and 'classroom' teachers to stay in teaching. This was not the case, however, for 'portfolio' teachers. For example, 'career' teacher Rachel detailed a very positive relationship with a departmental colleague, a member of the senior leadership team, whose collaborative intervention she felt was instrumental in enabling her to manage a challenging class. Negative experiences reinforced the desire of three 'portfolio' teachers to leave. A lack of trust and support among colleagues and a sense of competition were perceived as demotivating by Nadine; Kate felt she underwent 'death by observation', which increased the pressure of workload.

Leavers and stayers

The main reasons cited by teachers in this study for considering leaving teaching confirmed the findings of Smithers and Robinson (2003): heavy workload, pupil behaviour and remuneration in comparison to other professions. However, the interviews revealed subtle differences between the three groups. The 'portfolio' teachers were primarily concerned with issues of work-life management. For Nadine and Carl, 'it's not as rewarding as I thought it would be' (Nadine, term 3 year 2). Jackie was not 'desperate to leave as such' but felt she did not have the level of commitment 'to do it well' (term 3 year 2). Amy would initially have chosen to teach again, but she was less certain of this decision by year 2, feeling the tension between workload, personal life and job satisfaction:

I don't see myself in teaching forever, I can't do it, the energy you need to do this job... I have to say last year I spent very little time with friends or family, which was fine getting myself started, but I can't do that forever. (Term 1 year 2)

Working extra hours is fine, but not when it takes over all the time just to meet the standards I think there should be with the job. (Term 3 year 2)

'Career' teachers were more phlegmatic in their responses, expressing concern about their future in teaching:

I think the things that happen to you day in day out, I don't know how I'll feel in 5 years. I think it basically wears you down. (Rachel, term 1 year 2)

The fact that within five years you still haven't paid off all your debts, and that can be quite demoralising. (Liz, term 3 year 2)

Promoted in year 2, Ruth did 'feel like quitting a lot'; she hoped that it was a 'normal' feeling in this phase of her career. Nevertheless, in year 5, after one year in the role, she relinquished a considerable further promotion to Advanced Skills Teacher [AST], a highly remunerated role devised by the Department for Education and Skills [DfES] for 'excellent teachers'; in year 6 she was promoted again to subject leader.

Unlike these two groups, 'classroom' teachers all wished to continue teaching, but were also concerned about work conditions. Tim wanted to teach for as long as possible, but he worried that his holistic approach to education, at odds with present governmental policy, would force him to leave. Ariane complained of

Too much work, bad behaviour not being followed up, lack of support basically. I mean, not having a social life anymore, not having time for yourself. (Term 1 year 2)

Work-life balance

'I feel I am in danger of slipping and then feeling swamped'. ('Career' teacher Nina, term 1 year 2)

Potential burnout was a fear articulated by most new teachers and all spoke of overload. Apart from Jackie, all the 'portfolio' teachers frequently talked of fatigue or 'sheer exhaustion' (Kate). Nadine asserted that new teachers needed 'to be ready to forget about a social life for the first years at least' (term 3 year 2).

The 'classroom' teacher role appeared the preferred route for parenting, for those with and without children:

I have learned that I do not want to become a head of faculty because I see them struggling with paperwork! (Charlotte, term 3 year 2)

Heather felt she was managing work-life balance 'OK':

But only because I work part-time. [I] still work a silly amount of hours compared to the hours I'm actually paid for! (Term 3 year 2)

This group of teachers, then, might be said to be strategically managing their work and lives. Thus the level of tiredness for these teachers appeared less severe. Part-time teaching without parenting was the route for Ariane to avoid 'too much work' and become 'less stressed' (term 3 year 2). In year 2 Ariane and Tim were working on temporary supply contracts. Whereas Tim's priority was to attain full-time employment which he achieved in year 4, Ariane preferred to continue this level of involvement. Tim had managed work-life balance 'pretty well' because of his contract of 'general cover' for absent colleagues rather than a permanent post teaching languages:

My professional life is not as professional as I'd wish, but this allows my personal life to flourish. (Term 2 year 2)

He expected the 'pressure' to return, however, when he found a full time position with '9 or 10 hour days for 5 or 6 days a week' (term 1 year 2).

'Career' teachers were in full-time positions and though struggling to manage the workload, they accepted it and sustained their commitment in spite of being unable to maintain work-life balance. However, this was not without cost. Amanda had 'even turned down visitors at the weekend because of work/tiredness' (term 2 year 1) and lamented her otherwise very positive induction year:

How lost I felt at times and how tired and how miserable, and you know I felt really low at times thinking oh, I can't believe I've chosen this for my job, you know, this isn't living ... (Term 3 year 2)

Rebecca talked of 'suffering the consequences' of going out rather than working (term 2 year 2). Although Anna was 'on top of everything' she felt her work sometimes seemed 'like crisis management lurching from one deadline to the next!' (term 3 year 2). Liz lamented that 'much' of her 'personal life' was 'taken up with schoolwork' (term 1 year 2). Laura's weekends were 'very rarely' free of work (term 2 year 2). Only Rachel and Nina felt their workload was comparable with other professions (for example doctor and lawyer friends, not the 'comparable careers' of Morgan's research). Rachel alone achieved work-life balance effectively in year 2, by being realistic about what she could accomplish:

I just need my sleep and ... if I work too long I come in the next day and it's ineffective anyway because I'm resentful, I'm shattered and it doesn't work. (Term 1 year 2)

However, she then found her second year in teaching 'more stressful and busy' than the first with 'plenty of excitement/challenge/pressure' as her school was awarded specialist language college status in year 2; the specialist status for maintained schools in England brings additional funding, opportunities for career development and likely increased pressure and workload for those working in the specialism. Rachel left the school two years later to teach in a non-specialist status modern languages department. Ellen had aspirations in her personal life which would affect her workload, favouring a part-time contract if she 'had babies' (term 3 year 2). Her question 'am I allowed to admit that?' (term 3 year 4) hints at a stark division between career and family inherent in the intensification of teachers' work, perhaps even a discouragement to become a parent in the promoted or full-time career of teaching. Rebecca initially imagined that she would work part-time if she became a parent:

This relates to the balance personal and professional. I don't want to let the job take over. (Term 3 year 2)

However, she chose promotion to subject leadership by year 5.

Such portraits of continuing stress among teachers confirm the 1999 survey undertaken by the largest teachers' union in the UK, the National Union of Teachers (NUT, 2000) which found that 36 percent of teachers perceived the effects of stress all or most of the time. Key causes of teacher stress reported were long working hours; excessive workload; pressures of school inspections; providing cover for teacher shortages and absences; poor management; disruptive pupil behaviour; unnecessary bureaucracy; low self-esteem and criticism by politicians and the media. In the present study, although pupil behaviour improved for all NQTs with time (some quicker than others), the other causes of stress were all reported, the most frequent being long hours worked and excessive workload, which for most did not decrease with time. This suggests that the reform of 'school workforce remodelling' (DfES, 2003b), designed to decrease teachers' workload, has not yet done so.

The bureaucracy of change

The pressure of accountability for teachers in England was perceived to be particularly evident through the regular school inspection cycle undertaken by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). Inspections created additional pressure with 'everybody freaking together' (Rebecca, term 3 year 2). Of the 'portfolio' teachers, Jackie found Ofsted 'totally disruptive' (term 3 year 2) and Carl felt the pressure of external control keenly:

I don't want any more bloody forms to fill in and I don't want anybody breathing over me. Let me get on now, you've said I'm OK. I've gone through the standards. I've qualified as a teacher... Let me teach and let me do my job and bugger off for the rest of the time. (Term 1 year 2)

He declared 'increasing bureaucracy' 'depressing':

There are so many things all the time, new initiatives...but we're professionals and we do the things that are asked of us. It increases the amount of pressure on you. (Term 1 year 2)

Carl found the workload 'insurmountable' and 'never-ending' (term 1 year 2), but sounded a note of disquiet at developing cultural norms:

I'm amazed at how used to it all I'm getting, which is kind of worrying in a way because I'm used to just going home and crashing for a bit and then working and then practically going to bed and ... that is a bit frightening. (Term 3 year 2)

A head of department by year 5, he summarised his morale as 'not very positive' citing the 'usual' reasons: 'workload, stress, pupil indiscipline'. Kate managed to 'free up weekends by reducing lunch hour to 20 minutes' in year 2; by year 4 it was the 'unnecessary paperwork, data handling and proformas' she resented whereas she would 'cheerfully spend hours on anything that will benefit the children'.

'Career' teachers also disliked 'time-consuming and mind-numbing' administration and marking, but they and 'classroom' teachers nevertheless sought to keep up to date in these respects. These new teachers often welcomed initiatives, but felt they increased workload. Laura articulated a sense of frustration 'trying to implement new strategies' 'to make teaching more exciting' when workload meant

change took 'a backseat' (term 3 year 3). Frequent curriculum changes meant teachers 'had to make new resources for everything' (Amy, term 1 year 2) or teach 'from scratch' for some topics (Laura, term 3 year 2). Several of the beginning teachers were concerned and demoralised (for their own futures as teachers but also for the position of their subject) by the government's initiative to remove the compulsory status of modern languages from the post 14 curriculum in September 2004. This action had a most adverse early impact with only 25 percent of maintained schools retaining a compulsory modern language for 14-16 year olds by 2005 (CILT, 2005), leaving modern languages teachers and learners vulnerable: 'I couldn't do what I do if they removed languages' (Rebecca, term 3 year 2). In a short period of time teachers of the 'shortage' subject would no longer be in demand, as there were fewer pupils to teach. However, views on initiatives generally supported the findings of the PriceWaterhouseCoopers study that, although usually welcome in principle, 'the pace and manner of implementation of change' significantly increased teachers' workload (PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2001: 1-2).

Effects of experience in the early years of teaching: the frustrations increase, the energy declines

The differences between NQTs' abilities and desires to cope with the workload related to personal circumstances, school culture, notions of career, relationships with colleagues, relationships with senior colleagues and pupil intake. For example Ariane remained unhappy working with secondary age pupils, a situation which had arisen when she felt unsupported during induction; Carl became very demotivated during a local re-organisation which involved an amalgamation of schools; Nina felt her workload compared favourably with her previous career as teaching was much more rewarding work; Laura and Nina felt unsupported and consequently undervalued by the senior leadership team. A professional learning culture where NQTs felt appreciated and able to collaborate with senior and more experienced colleagues and peers facilitated a more balanced approach to workload.

Throughout their early years in teaching the images beginning teachers gave of their workload graphically revealed the weight of pressure: 'very bogged down', 'drowning in bureaucratic procedures', 'it can sometimes drive you mad'. The 'high' of Morgan's study (2005)

translated into a demotivating inability to switch off from teaching for many, across teacher types:

There's always something to do... always, always, always something to do...' ('Portfolio' teacher Carl, term 3 year 2)

At the end of the day I go home, I work and go to bed and there's no time to think about anything else but teaching. ('Career' teacher Laura, term 3 year 2, who worked on Christmas Day)

Teaching becomes a lifestyle and is never easily left at school. ('Career' teacher Liz, term 3 year 4)

Some beginning teachers (especially 'portfolio' teachers) rejected the workload and work-life balance of their peers and more experienced colleagues that consisted of 'too much crap for little remuneration' (Carl, term 3 year 4):

I am not sure this is what I want to do all my life. (Nadine, term 1 year 2)

It's very intense isn't it? And if you don't love it, I don't think you'd keep that up, just like if you're ill, you can't do a day's work teaching because you have to have full energy. (Jackie, term 3 year 2)

'Career' teachers sought longevity and advancement in teaching, but some began to worry about their future in teaching. In year 2 Anna had been 'vibrant, tired but still very much enjoying it' and felt she had 'come home professionally' yet by year 4 doubted if she had 'enough energy to continue doing this until 60!' Liz 'loved' teaching and wanted to move into senior leadership, but already in year 2 worried about her 'capacity for teaching long term':

The more you do teaching, it seems the more that's put onto you, you've more paper to shuffle and it can sometimes drive you mad... I wonder if I can do that when I'm older... I wonder how long I can sustain that mentally and physically.

I just can't imagine another job where there's so many things going on at the same time, all of the time. It's from every angle and it's non-stop. And surely there is burnout.

Keen to advance, 'career' teachers were, nevertheless, aware of the increase in workload synonymous with promotion. By year 5, Anna relinquished her longed-for pastoral promotion through fear of burnout. Those who enjoyed swift promotion reiterated this concern:

The problem with career prospects of course... it's a massive extra workload for the amount of money you do get, which isn't a great deal. (Liz, term 3 year 2)

Although aware of the developmental effect it could have on any character and career prospects, there have been times when I have regretted taking on the extra responsibilities. (Ellen, term 3 year 4)

Anna had felt able to 'switch off' in year 2, but by year 4 felt this was more problematic. Ruth was overworking, 'not sleeping' as she was 'up so late' and at 'work so early as well' (term 1 year 2). She promised herself to change her priorities as she already had two remunerated promotions in year 2, nervous of how much and how quickly she was progressing:

There's more to life than my job' will be my mantra! My job is very, very important to me and is a huge part of who I am, but so are my friends, family and boyfriend. (Term 3 year 2)

By year 4 however, she had a considerable promotion as an AST. By year 5 she had taken a demotion and had a promotion again to head of department by year 6. The following tension between 'working to live' and 'living to work' was representative:

I feel that work could easily take over if I should let it, but I don't want my life to be entirely governed by my job. (Ellen, term 1 year 2)

Ruth saw colleagues relinquishing roles:

They're stepping down from positions, they are going part-time and others have applied for jobs to get out of school. (Term 3 year 2)

Others rejected the increased workload associated with promotion. 'Classroom' teachers felt their lack of additional responsibility supported career longevity. Reduced hours were an important factor in staying in the profession. Charlotte felt she could teach part-time 'for a very long time' but was unsure if she 'could do it at all' full-time (term 3 year 2).

Discussion

The level of exhaustion cited suggests a far from easy beginning in teaching under a system which purports to protect NQTs in their first year with, for example, 10 percent alleviation from teaching. This

'alleviation' is in comparison to the role of experienced teacher (from year 2 onwards); the workload in year 1, however, represents an increase for beginning teachers in comparison to their initial teacher education. In the three years of study, overall concern with workload was consistent. The workload was perceived as demanding in the first year and new teachers felt it increased in year 2, especially where this was linked to initiatives and an increase in responsibility. Whereas Morgan's research for the TDA (2005) celebrates the 63 percent of teachers reporting a frequent 'high' when totally immersed in their work, with one in five never thinking about anything else other than the 'job in hand', new teachers in this study, who also enjoyed their teaching, were demotivated when they felt they had 'no time to think of anything other than teaching'. All the new teachers continued to bemoan a lack of time and felt that more time would increase their satisfaction. They wanted to work collaboratively with colleagues, but many perceived collaboration as increasing workload. The TDA has addressed recruitment problems by highlighting the satisfactions of teaching in successive advertising campaigns, but the reality of workload, the pace and frequency of initiatives and intensity of teachers' work threatens retention.

All beginning teachers in this study strained to come to terms with the realities of teaching; for the majority the struggle to establish productive relationships with pupils and feel they were doing a good job was temporary, but for most the desire to reduce workload and the lack of time to liaise with colleagues remained. By now their work-life balance should be improving, but a Times Educational Supplement survey of 500 teachers in 2005 reported that the contractual work-life balance has not reduced workload and the pace of initiatives continues to intensify teachers' work. In their 2002-03 evaluation of the DfES workforce remodelling pilot Thomas et al. (2004: 20) reported that teachers worked slightly fewer hours but that 'higher levels of satisfaction' involved not merely reduction in hours but also 'commitment to teaching, working relations with children and colleagues or the ethos of the school'. Although the satisfactions of teaching and working with pupils and colleagues were important to the teachers in the present study, the question remained as to whether such motivation alone would sustain them through the workload, which they perceived to be difficult to manage. There were differences in individuals' abilities or desires to cope with workload which relate to school context and culture, relationships with colleagues, relationships

with pupils, pupil intake, individual notions of career and personal circumstances. These differences were manifested in the ways teachers identified themselves; where they drew satisfaction from the above factors in their working conditions they articulated greater motivation and job satisfaction. Where their working conditions were perceived as less satisfactory, their projected longevity in teaching and desire to manage the workload diminished. Although the new teachers signalled differences in their career aspirations, all expressed concerns about the negative effects of workload upon their intentions to remain in the profession. This was especially the case for 'career' and 'portfolio' teachers. There were differences between groups of teachers' commitment to the profession and to coping with the workload. Work overload and intensity were frequent themes of the 'portfolio' teachers, who articulated a sense of threat to vocation, job satisfaction and collegiality in the pace of their work and their administrative burden, which was low on their list of priorities. They felt that alternative careers were available to them. Although 'classroom' teachers struggled to come to terms with the heavy workload they managed to cope with the intensity of their work and achieve work-life balance and satisfaction in their core work in the classroom through a reduction in time spent teaching, which also resulted in lower levels of remuneration, status and involvement in wider school issues. However, 'classroom' teachers believed they were undertaking important work. 'Career' teachers appeared exhausted; they relied on stamina to keep up to date with their workload and had a sense of pride in keeping abreast of administration. They sought promotion and more, and different, challenges, which simultaneously intensified their work. Importantly, 'career' teachers articulated a concern that they might have progressed too quickly and they worried about the levels of energy needed to maintain satisfaction in the long-term.

The negative responses to early promotion even by 'career' teachers raise questions about building capacity in school leadership and suggest a need for research which considers the consequences of early promotion for teacher well-being and retention. Several new teachers in this study highlighted the fear (realised by Anna and Ruth) that extra responsibility would lead to burnout, which raises the concern as to who will undertake leadership roles in schools. 'Career' teachers felt they had to become 'accustomed to the extra work' that accompanied the additional responsibility of early advancement. Liz highlighted the tensions inherent in the level of 'challenge' in year 2:

I've got a responsibility point, and I've got a lot to do for that and the department needs sorting out, organising and stuff.

It doesn't get any easier, maybe. You're told throughout your teaching practice and your first year that it does, and I haven't found it, I've found it getting even harder. Because I think my expectations are getting higher. When I look back, I know it's only two years, but when I look back to two years ago, I was totally different. In terms of how much I put into it, well I thought I was putting everything into it then, but looking back I wasn't. My expectations are higher. Maybe the fact that it's all consuming, isn't it? And you can't sustain that, and it is very stressful at times. There's been two times in the past year when I've seriously considered leaving.

Some beginning teachers in this study struggled to 'have a life' beyond teaching and women in a female-dominated profession considered full-time teaching (a parent-friendly profession before intensification) as unsuited to parenting. The nine 'career' teachers were all female; this is noteworthy, as according to the DfES (2005) male teachers still occupy disproportionately more senior positions in secondary schools in England, although this gender gap is decreasing. It can be argued therefore that the 'choice' between teaching full-time, taking a promotion or parenting might be a deliberation for an increasing number of women teachers. Analysis of the present data suggests a disturbing image of a two-tier profession of teachers (those with and those without children) which reinforces gender stereotypes, where teachers in leadership roles are potentially exhausted, possibly early in their careers, return to the classroom or disappear from the teaching force. In an increasingly female profession, there is a need for research into the choices for women teachers between parenting and promoted or even full-time careers.

Conclusions

This paper has sought to provide insights into a range of issues experienced by beginning teachers during their early years in the profession, which have implications for policy makers, school leaders and initial teacher educators concerned with standards, commitment and retention. This study would suggest a need for policy makers to recognise that performance related incentives and initiative overload intensify teachers' work and may thus actually demoralise teachers and exacerbate beginning teacher attrition. New teachers' workload signified overload for the vast majority, a recasting of their

commitment for some, for others a fear of future burnout, making long-term satisfaction difficult to maintain. Some rejected the workload and work-life imbalance of their parents' generation and more experienced colleagues, challenging the outdated notion of 'living to work' in favour of 'working to live', and testing their commitment to learners. Thus far, Amy has left teaching to have children, with no plans to return; Kate and Ariane have retrained and are working in the primary phase (Kate on a permanent contract and Ariane on temporary supply contracts). Two 'career' teachers have relinquished promoted positions. This is a high rate of turnover beyond the level of changing school. Half the new teachers entered the profession following considerable investment in a well-considered change of career; to date they are still teaching, although some are considering leaving. The present findings on changing work patterns might also challenge initial teacher educators to develop models of professionalism which recognise that teaching is not necessarily a career for life and which enable beginning teachers to cope with increased mobility and rapid change. Adopting such models of professionalism might empower new teachers to act as change agents, or 'activist teacher professionals' (Sachs, 2003), in order to improve the quality of education within the constantly changing environment. With such a recasting of professionalism new teachers might then move beyond implementing others' initiatives and instead be able to work in different educational contexts, and revitalise their commitment throughout a teaching career with longevity.

A concern must remain regarding retention beyond the first year, when more is expected of the teachers and all teachers in this sample spoke of the increased intensity of work. Bubb and Earley (2006) characterise as 'educational vandalism' the demise of dedicated early professional development funding for teachers, which was found to have a positive impact on teachers in their second and third years of teaching. New teachers have ongoing needs beyond the support of induction; it is the first five years which appear crucial in terms of retention. The present study suggests that where a new teacher is able and crucially has the time to join a 'professional learning community' (McLaughlin and Talbert, 2001; Hargreaves, 2003) and collaborate with more experienced colleagues, such a collaborative culture which values contribution, ongoing learning and joint inquiry is more likely to sustain commitment, energy and a desire to remain in the profession. Hargreaves insists that professional learning communities are not contrived groupings where teachers are forced to collaborate on imposed initiatives, and the collaboration ceases when

the initiative is implemented. School cultures which do not engender collaboration will lead at best to the frequently reported survival of new teachers or at worst, attrition; both outcomes have negative consequences for pupil learning. Cultures which rest on isolation and individualisation are by definition lonely workplaces which leave new teachers unable to move forward other than on their own; they may 'learn' through unchecked experience, leave the school for a more supportive environment or even be lost to the profession. Beginning teachers are more likely to thrive and develop in an atmosphere of trust and openness as part of a genuine collaborative culture. There is a danger in the statutory induction arrangements that support is less of a priority than monitoring and assessment, and that support ends with the completion of induction. Genuine collaborative cultures should be challenging without being threatening, should encourage debate, discussion and learning between new and experienced colleagues, and thus provide high levels of support and development beyond the statutory arrangements. New teachers need emotional support and encouragement as well as pedagogical support from more experienced colleagues.

At a local level, school leaders have the power to engender a collegiate, collaborative community, support work-life balance, mediate initiatives and provide conditions which would support the type of professionalism which is more likely to reduce the danger of burnout and attrition, and therefore sustain teachers throughout a career.

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