

Helping early career teachers survive and thrive: Insights from the Teachers of Promise Study

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Linda Darling-Hammond (2003)

- “Keeping good teachers should be one of the most important agenda items for any school leader”

The workplace matters

“Given evidence that new teachers are likely to change schools or leave teaching if they are dissatisfied, schools must become more supportive workplaces if they are to attract and retain teachers of high quality”

(Susan Moore Johnson, 2006)

Professional cultures

“The quality of new teachers’ interactions with their colleagues may determine their success as teachers and their decision whether or not to stay in teaching”

- veteran-oriented
- novice -oriented
- integrated

Susan Moore-Johnson and The Project on The Next Generation of Teachers, 2004

Professional learning communities

Effectiveness of sustained, job-embedded, collaborative teacher learning strategies to:

- examine practice and student performance
- develop and implement more effective instructional practices
- learn about, try out and reflect on new practices in their specific context
- share individual knowledge and expertise

(Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009)

Conditions that support joint work

- Peer observations of practice
- Analyses of student work and student data
- Study groups to make sense of practice by reading of relevant research and making links to own practice

(Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009)

Background to *Teachers of Promise* study

- Purposive sample of newly fully registered teachers selected in 2004 (6 regions)
- Who qualified?
- NZCER study 2005-2008
- Data:
 - 3 interviews
 - 2 survey periods 2005,2008(including those overseas, parenting, left teaching)
 - 1 workshop and focus groups (Auckland, Christchurch)

Participants

- 20 male teachers, 37 female teachers in 2005
- Most (36) under 30 years
- Twelve 31 to 40 years
- Nine 41 to 50 years
- About two thirds of the teachers were career changers

Where were they in 2008?

- 31 (54 %) still teaching in NZ
- 12 teaching overseas (mostly primary)
- 6 parenting (all female)
- 3 studying
- 5 left school teaching (4 in teaching-related positions)

Survey March 2008

Surveys for participants:

- Parenting (expected time out, possibility of returning to teaching, reasons if not planning to teach again)
- No longer teaching in a school (why left, what would have kept you in teaching, job satisfaction current job of teaching, comparisons of salary, working conditions, work-life balance)
- Overseas (teaching experiences if any, anticipated return to NZ, type of position might apply for on return)
- Still teaching (current roles, career plans, workload, working conditions, professional development)

Roles and responsibilities

- 25/31 formal extended roles
 - 5 HODs
 - 2 syndicate leaders
 - 2 Deans
 - 1 Acting DP
 - 1 permanent AP
 - 5 tutor teachers
 - SCT; professional development co-ordinator; teaching and learning Director; ICT & pedagogy lead teacher
 - Curriculum leadership: sports, PE; Aquatics, dance/drama....

Roles and responsibilities (cont)

- More opportunity for formal management roles in secondary school. One primary teacher had 7 additional roles (no MU or time allowance)
- 12 had specific PD for roles
- 9 had received significant in-school mentoring
- 11 "own efforts"

Career plans next 5 years (n=31)

- 26 continue to develop and strengthen classroom practice
- 20 seek leadership/management
- Becoming a principal (2 primary male, 1 sec female) 5 "undecided")

"I am in my second year as AP. I believe I need a couple of years still at this school then I would like to work at another school as DP. This will allow me to see how another principal operates, and give me more time to see if principalship is for me." (Male, middle school)

Career plans next 5 years (cont)

- 9 see parental leave as likely
- 10 likely to change schools
- 2 Likely to leave teaching

Working conditions

- Why?
- Which?
- Satisfaction with relationships –highest with students
- School leadership – support and interest of principal
- Physical working environment and resources
- School organisation
- Professional learning

Issues

- Isolation
 - third feel “left alone”
 - 20% don't have regular scheduled time to work with other teachers

Lack of dedicated time to work together

"Everyone is so busy there is a lack of time to discuss problems or do anything about them." (Female, secondary)

"Lack of time to plan or make new resources or change lessons that are ineffective." (Female: teaches 8 classes 9-12, multi levels, multi subjects)

Professional learning

- Primary have more frequent opportunities than secondary to learn with their colleagues
- Primary get more frequent feedback on their teaching (4/10 secondary cf 4/21 primary have had none in last year)
- 6/10 secondary cf 5/21 primary have not observed other teachers
- (19/21 primary teachers report frequent reflection on teaching, cf 5/10 secondary occasionally reflect.
- Few primary teachers engaged in formal study for qualifications (4/20 primary, 4/10 secondary)
- Primary teachers do more professional reading

The plateau years (yr 4...)

- Continuing to care about their teaching but feeling like they've hit a plateau
- Moving into management positions and other responsibilities
- Thinking about growing families and trying to make next career decisions

Three key plateau ingredients

- Consolidate (and extend)
- Share (and learn how)
- Breathe

Consolidate

- Seeing the 'bigger picture' now
- Most value professional learning
- Few are members of wider learning communities
- Dependent on their own schools for frequency and quality of professional learning (primary offer more)
- Schools show differing levels of commitment to teachers' ongoing professional learning

Consolidate and *extend*

- Structured opportunities to learn from own practice absent in some workplaces
- Continuing participation in collaborative partnerships fostered by school-wide PD contracts

Share

- Beginning to support other teachers (usually without training)

I think a little bit of training, maybe some general things like all the things they [student teachers] need to cover, like how often they should be observing you and what is expected of them...a visiting lecturer came in and said he [the student teacher] hasn't done any of his reflection or anything, and I didn't realise that it was my job to check any of that (Zoe, 25, primary)

Share

I feel like I want to contribute. I want to be part of the school. I don't want just to do my job and go home. (Rose, 33, primary)

It's a real issue for me, there is a beginning teacher that works in the class next to me, and he is in his second year, and I have helped him a lot this year, because his tutor teacher just hasn't done it.

(Sarah, 29, primary)

(Wanting to) breathe

- Just over half said they had less investment in their classroom practice than two years previously.

I think I have gone backwards because of the extra pressures, like taking on the HOD role, taking on all of the buying of the sports equipment, all the extra roles that you have got. I feel I have lost a wee bit of focus so you sort of go into the class and you get there and you are held up all over the show and by the time you get to the class it's like 'hooh, right here we go, let's start again'. So I think I have probably gone backwards a titch. In four years I think it has moved back and mainly because of those pressures from up above. (James, 31, intermediate)

Wanting to breathe

- Extra demands
 - inhibit investment in developing expertise
 - distract from “what matters”

And we are always addressing or prioritising that thing which is most immediate and that thing which is likely to have the negative consequence for you personally in the short term, but on the back burner we tend to put the big picture things and the thinking and reflection and improving pedagogy and the key things that really do matter because they are not what has to be in the pigeon hole by tomorrow morning.

(Ruby, 28, secondary)

Ruby's story

- Her route into teaching
- Her ITE
- The support she got in her first two years
- Experience as an HOD
- Experience as a SCT

ITE (Secondary Grad Dip Teaching): the start of the continuum

- Positive about her curriculum area
- Appreciated in-depth curriculum preparation and range of resources
- Felt well prepared in terms of literacy strategies and theories of teaching and learning
- Felt that she had been encouraged to develop her own beliefs and approaches to teaching

First two years as a teacher

- Was a mid-year graduate
- First 6 months in NZ relief teaching (familiar environment, enjoyable, but no PRT programme)
- London in the New Year, position described as 'a little challenging'
 - School had faced closure, under special measures
 - 13 different classes, 6 subjects, timetable a shambles
 - Dispirited staff, those with ambition left the school

First two years as a teacher (cont)

- No BT support programme- asked to become assistant HOD, finally agreed
- Totally unprepared, no support provided
- Mentoring not part of school culture
- The first OTT to stay a full year

Back in New Zealand

- **First job** (2 year position) in small provincial town
- Some PRT support. Left after one term
- **Next job** after Easter, classes had already had 4 changes of teacher. Some PRT guidance and support
- Assistant HOD, then acting HOD

Experience as HOD

- No preparation or training for the role
- Non-contact periods 'consumed' by management tasks
- Preparation for teaching and assessment done in evenings and weekends
- Busyness is interfering with job satisfaction and quality of teaching
- No time to work alongside teachers

Specialist classroom teacher

A new role that may provide/offer a career path focussed on enhancing teacher expertise

e.g. Ruby reported her involvement in:

- whole-staff development
- teacher research groups
- groups of teachers with common issues
- supporting groups of beginning teachers
- team teaching
- modelling in her own class for other teachers
- observing and providing feedback for other teachers
- recording student understandings of learning

*You have to be approachable and accessible and you need to be really real. And not to be seen as one of **them**. One of those ones down the corridor.*

Experience as SCT

- Four hours a week
- Some initial training and on-going support
- Collegial rather than managerial role
- Feels able (finally) to contribute meaningfully to
 - Shared understandings of learning and teaching
 - Enhanced learning of all students
 - Participation in collaborative learning with colleagues (in-school and external networks)
 - Dispositions to continue learning
 - Support other teachers' learning

Present day

- Sees SCT role as very satisfying
- Perfect for where her “head and heart are” in terms of teaching and her career
- School also provides professional stimulation as part of its “lead learning group” (focus on research readings, discussions about improving learning)
- Open culture (sharing practice, not having to pretend to be perfect...)

Implications/discussion

- Ruby has found her 'niche' in year 5-6 despite a lack of support in her early years
- How can we think of the career path in a new way to support the distinctly different phases of a teacher's career?
- How can we ensure teachers like Ruby do not leave the profession with burnout?