A study of learners' situational vulnerability: new teachers in Scotland

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Abstract

In this paper an example of vulnerable learners in the workplace is explored, namely new teachers in Scotland. New teachers may not have been regarded as vulnerable learners before but it will be argued that because they are subject to situational vulnerability at the beginning of their careers they are vulnerable learners. In their first year teachers are new to their school as well as new to their profession and in Scotland new teachers are also vulnerable because they are on a one year fixed term contract, are working towards the Standard for Full Registration and need to obtain satisfactory references for future job applications. A sequential mixed methods study was conducted in which online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from new teachers themselves. The extent to which new teachers are in a vulnerable situation was explored and how expansive practices in their learning environment could lessen their vulnerability and provide them with learning opportunities. The identification of expansive features in school learning environments demonstrates ways that new teachers' learning can be supported. With an improved understanding of the position of new teachers and ways to reduce their vulnerability in their transition from student teacher to qualified teacher, their professional learning can be enhanced.

Keywords: new teachers; induction; vulnerability; learning environment.

Introduction

After initial teacher education in Scotland eligible new teachers are guaranteed a place on the Teacher Induction Scheme. This is a one year full-time temporary contract in a local government-funded school during which they work towards full registration. This temporary status can de-motivate and isolate new teachers (Fenwick and Weir, 2010). The new teacher has an induction supporter or mentor and a reduced teaching timetable to enable

time for continuing professional development. By the end of the induction year teachers should have satisfied the Standard for Full Registration (General Teaching Council for Scotland, 2012) but the time to achieve this can be extended. The Teacher Induction Scheme is an improvement on the previous practice of multiple supply posts (see Draper, Fraser and Taylor, 1997) but it still places new teachers in a vulnerable situation.

Literature Review

Vulnerability of new teachers

The term vulnerability usually relates to a person's susceptibility to being hurt, mistreated or exploited. Its use has become widespread in mass media and in certain welfare and research fields such as disaster studies, social work and education (Misztal, 2011). The concept of vulnerability can also be used as a way of understanding the human condition. People are social and interdependent beings which makes us susceptible to harm by others, for example in terms of self-realisation and the development of confidence and self-respect (Misztal, 2011, pp.47-48) and in terms of being rejected or humiliated (Mackenzie, Rogers and Dodds, 2014, p.1). Adopting Mackenzie et al.'s (2014) synthesis of both ontological vulnerability that is part and parcel of being human and the identification of context-specific forms of vulnerability it is possible to view the position of new teachers as an example of context-specific or situational vulnerability. New teachers rely on and, hence, are vulnerable to colleagues and those with authority over them such as induction mentors and head teachers for their self-respect and self-realisation as a teacher. They are vulnerable learners because of their situation in the workplace as a new teacher.

New teachers may not have been termed vulnerable learners before, in Scotland they are graduates with a guaranteed one year contract with the prospect of future employment in a respected profession, but poverty should not be regarded as the same as vulnerability (Misztal, 2011, p.23). Beginning teachers are in the process of forming their professional identity and practices. Entry into teaching has traditionally been associated with 'vulnerability, intensity and isolation' (Curry, Jaxon et al., 2008, p.672). New teachers are looking for self-affirmation, while they are coping with vulnerability and visibility (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002) in an isolated profession (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011). This vulnerability is partly related to the uncertainty that new teachers face (Johnson and Birkeland, 2003).

While being aware of new teachers' vulnerability it is important to guard against using the language of vulnerability and care to introduce stereotyping and unjustified paternalism of those identified as vulnerable (Mackenzie, Rogers and Dodds, 2014, p.16). Rather than imbue those with power with a duty of protection over subordinates it is more useful to emphasise the duty to promote the autonomy and capabilities of the vulnerable (ibid). There is a difference between responding to situational vulnerability, supporting the development and use of autonomy, and entrenching or exacerbating this vulnerability. Thus, head teachers and mentors can be seen to have a dual duty of protecting vulnerable new teachers from harm but also promoting their capacity to be autonomous at all times.

To explore, understand and mitigate the effects of vulnerability in the world today, Misztal (2011) proposes a tripartite conceptual framework through which to understand an individual's experiences of, and their resilience to, their own vulnerability: dependence on others; the unpredictability of the future; and the irreversibility of the past (p.50). While Mackenzie argues for the recognition of situational vulnerability Misztal takes a more individualistic stance with each person having their own experiences of and their own resilience to vulnerability (p.49). In this paper the concept of situational vulnerability is preferred in order to understand the position of new teachers in schools. Responses to the vulnerable position of new teachers as learners in the workplace can be analysed as expansive and restrictive practices in the school learning environment.

The learning environment of school workplaces

Schools are workplaces where professional learning takes place and thus the learning environment the school provides for staff can be analysed in terms of its expansive and restrictive practices. A practice is expansive when its adoption will encourage legitimate peripheral participation and restrictive when it leads to exclusion from the community of practice of teachers. Legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) is a way of conceptualising and understanding new teachers' learning as it explains the journey of newcomer to experienced professional. However, as temporary employees working reduced hours it could be argued that new teachers will never move beyond the periphery of their community of practice (Evans, Hodkinson et al, 2006). Research on communities of practice can seem overly positive about relations between people, and issues of power and control are often absent in discussions of workplace learning (Hodkinson et al., 2004). People do not gain equal access to activities and support

in the workplace and 'although learning at work is inevitable and ongoing, it is selective and contested' (Billett 2001, p.20).

As Lave and Wenger (1991) showed, what and how new entrants learn grows out of the environment in which they are situated. However, as well as depending on the social or environmental context, new teacher learning depends on the individual context or learning disposition of the individual teacher (Shanks, Robson and Gray, 2012). Both concepts, learning environment and learning disposition, can be considered in terms of a continuum from expansive to restrictive. It has been argued that teacher learning is best improved through a strategy that increases learning opportunities and enhances the likelihood that teachers will want to take up those opportunities, and this can be done through the construction of more expansive learning environments for teachers (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2005).

Managers and supervisors have a pivotal role in the workplace learning culture or environment, as enablers of expansive practices and controllers of restrictive ones. The head teacher is a key figure in the transition process for new teachers: in terms of supportive leadership (Skule, 2004; Ashton, 2004); access to information (Skår, 2010; Ashton, 2004; Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002); the encouragement of teacher collaboration (Greenlee and Dedeugd, 2002; Fantilli and McDougall, 2009); and the allocation of work which provides access to professional learning (Fuller and Unwin, 2004; Eraut, 2004). Head teachers themselves need opportunities to learn how to facilitate learning at work (Gustavsson, 2009).

In addition to head teachers supporting the new teacher it helps if there are colleagues who suggest professional learning opportunities as they can support the management in the development of an expansive learning environment (Gustavsson, 2009, p.255). New teachers want people who are there for them and who are accessible, willing and able to listen to them and provide help when they need it (Hobson, 2009). New teachers also need good quality interpersonal relationships in and around the school so that they have the chance to ask for advice and talk over issues (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002). Colleagues have repeatedly been found to be an important resource for new professionals' support and learning in the workplace (Johnson and Birkeland, 2003, Draper and O'Brien, 2006, Ulvik, Smith and Helleve, 2009, Skår, 2010). Learning in and from social relations at work can be a double-edged sword as relationships can be both a source of pleasure and a source of pain (Collin, 2008). While some colleagues will be supportive others may be indifferent or even hostile. It has been reported that some teachers resisted the extra work required to implement the Teacher Induction Scheme in Scotland (MacIver, 2008).

One way to reduce the vulnerability of new teachers is by joint working and collaboration with other teachers. Collaboration with experienced subject or stage colleagues such as team teaching and informal mentoring are important parts of support for new teachers' development (Fantilli and McDougall, 2009). Collaboration with colleagues gives new teachers an opportunity to examine their work practices and analyse their beliefs and assumptions. They can explore uncertainties related to teaching and learning in general as well as specific issues to be found in the context of their own school and classroom. However, collaboration is not intrinsically positive, it may reinforce existing beliefs, norms and values and so may not necessarily be an agency for change or improved learning. By taking part in collaboration new teachers are exposing their vulnerability with the aim of it being responded to in a positive way, but it can be exploited. One danger in responding to a person's or group's vulnerability is to enact paternalistic approaches which do not promote autonomy (Mackenzie et al., p.16). Another difficulty in relation to new teachers' collaboration is that the spontaneous kind, namely, informal, unplanned and opportunistic collaboration, is, by its very nature, impossible to plan or control (Williams, Prestage and Bedward, 2001, p.265).

In the Teacher Induction Scheme in Scotland each new teacher has an induction supporter or mentor who will work in their school or across a number of schools. The mentor is meant to meet them weekly to discuss their practice and professional development with a focus on the elements of the Standard for Full Registration (General Teaching Council for Scotland, 2012). Furthermore the mentor observes and assesses the new teacher against this Standard. There is no formal application or recruitment process for induction year mentors and there is no specific training required for the role. There has been a call made for a more rigorous selection process and compulsory training (Recommendation 28, Donaldson, 2010).

New teachers appreciate formal mentoring and the opportunity for social dialogue with their mentor (Fox, Wilson and Deaney, 2011) as well as their informal unstructured support (Parker, Ndoye and Imig, 2009, Harrison, Dymoke and Pell, 2006). Physical proximity to mentors has been found to be important (Barrera, Braley and Slate, 2010) as beginning teachers appreciate 'ease-of-access' to the mentor for both informal and formal interactions (Harrison, Dymoke and Pell, 2006, p.1065). One contested issue is whether mentors should have both supporting and assessing roles in relation to their mentees. It has been argued that mentors should not be involved in assessing the new teachers they are mentoring so that their relationship can be based on mutual trust in which risk-free learning can occur (Hobson, 2009). Bradbury and Koballa (2008) described the two functions of support and

assessment as 'conflicting roles' (p.2135). This has been explored in the Swedish (Fransson, 2010) and the Scottish context (Recommendation 29, Donaldson, 2010). A new teacher may be reticent in exposing their vulnerability to the person who is assessing their competency against the Standard for Full Registration. For learning to be effective between the mentor and the new teacher, there needs to be a relationship based on trust. The mentee needs to be confident enough to make mistakes, be corrected and advised without the mentor ridiculing them (Ashton, 2004, p.50). Misztal sees the development of trust as a way to combat vulnerability in terms of dependence on others (2011, p.50).

Two research questions were devised to explore the issue of the vulnerability of new teachers:

1. In what ways do new teachers experience situational vulnerability in the workplace?

2. How do practices in school learning environments reduce or increase new teachers' situational vulnerability?

Methodology

This paper uses data from one of the Scottish Teachers for a New Era (STNE) studies at the University of Aberdeen. STNE was funded by the Scottish Government, the Hunter Foundation and the University and supported primary school teachers through their initial teacher education, induction year and first year as fully registered teachers. The original study focused on how new teachers learn in the workplace. The vulnerability of the new teachers was noted at the time of the study and relevant findings are reported here. A sequential mixed methods approach was used with responses to online questionnaires informing the focus of semi-structured interviews (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). A pragmatist approach was taken by the researcher in this study. The concept of pragmatism is typically associated with mixed methods research (ibid). A pragmatic approach means using the most appropriate mechanisms of data collection and data analysis to answer the particular research questions rather than narrowly following a particular methodological regime.

Online questionnaires and a request for interview participants were sent to 167 new teachers (both primary and secondary) who had completed their initial teacher education at the University of Aberdeen and agreed to be contacted for research purposes. Ten prospective primary school teachers volunteered to be interviewed of whom eight were female and two were male. They were placed in schools across Scotland and their head teachers were aware they were being interviewed for the research study. Six interviewees had school-

based mentors and four had local government area-wide mentors. Interviewees gave written informed consent and were aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The interviewees were asked to choose a pseudonym but the majority preferred a more anonymous identification system of Teacher A, B, and so on which is used below.

The first questionnaire was completed by 53 new teachers (31.7% response rate) and the second questionnaire by 48 teachers (28.7% response). There were two rounds of interviews: all participants were interviewed in the sixth month of the school year; and nine were interviewed in the last four weeks of the school year.

The quantitative data in the questionnaires was analysed using the statistical software package SPSS to see if there were relationships between different items in the questionnaire, for example frequency of meetings with the mentor and the mentor's seniority. No findings of statistical significance or importance were discovered in this analysis. Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim and, along with responses to open-ended questions in the questionnaires, were imported into the computer assisted qualitative analysis data software NVivo. This qualitative data was then analysed and coded according to categories identified in a pilot study and new codes which arose during the coding process. The quantitative and qualitative data were interrogated for similarities and inconsistencies during this analysis.

The vulnerability of new teachers was explored and the learning environment that each interviewed teacher was working in was considered in terms of expansive and restrictive practices. For example how the new teachers were introduced to the school and the level of support they received from their head teacher, their mentor and other colleagues.

Findings

The findings are structured in terms of the research questions and primacy has been given to the qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews. Other research findings in relation to new teachers' individual learning dispositions and the importance of informal learning are reported elsewhere (Shanks, Robson and Gray, 2012, Shanks and Robson, 2012).

1. **In what ways do new teachers experience situational vulnerability in their workplace?**

The new teachers expressed feelings of vulnerability in their interviews. For example, in relation to panic before the start of term:

... and I think what really hit me when I was setting up my classroom the week before I went in, I really wasn't prepared, like I didn't really know what I was doing, there was so many like kinda the small kinda day-to-day things, I had no idea and I was really panicking. … we have two other teachers, and I did ask them questions all the time, and they're really, really helpful. (Teacher F, 1st interview)

For this teacher, from the very beginning, the fact that she had colleagues close by to go to for help and advice was a source of comfort. The teacher had found the level of responsibility daunting:

Nobody actually checks up on me which I find really worrying because if I really don't feel I have enough knowledge erm, to be kind of left alone, to be fully responsible for these children's learning, I don't feel like I know as much as I should do, erm, and if I'm not asking, I don't get told. So I find that quite challenging. Knowledge is taken for granted (Teacher F, 1st interview).

A new teacher's introduction to their induction year workplace can set the tone for the year, in relation to their perceived importance in the school, their relationships with colleagues, the level of support they will receive from the senior management team and how confident the new teacher can feel that their contribution will be valued. They find out how their vulnerability will be treated; whether it will be responded to in a supportive manner; or whether it may be ignored or taken advantage of.

To investigate how welcoming their school was the questionnaire respondents were asked about what, if any, workplace induction they had received. It was found that new teachers do not receive a comprehensive introduction or induction into their school workplace (see table below).

	Percentages (respondents could select all categories or none)
Tour of the school	90.4
Introduced to all the staff within first 2 weeks of term	78.8
Given copies of school policies	75
School policies explained	25

Table 1 Workplace induction (1st questionnaire)

It can be seen from the table above that while over 90% of respondents said they had a tour of the school only a quarter of respondents said that school policies were explained to them. This is their very first teaching post and many will not have had to follow written workplace policies and procedures before, for example the procedures for reporting absence or the school's behaviour management policy. At times the interviewees felt that they were expected to know everything rather than being supported as a new member of the profession:

> *On the whole they are good, and they are supportive and stuff. So it's good, but there's just little things where you think, 'you could really have explained that better to me!'* [laughter] (Teacher G, 1st interview)

New teachers may feel vulnerable because of their age if they are in their early twenties:

> *Erm, but that is also really nerve-racking because you just kind of think oh the parents will be like what, what does she know, even though you know you've had the kids for a whole year, I don't know you just get quite conscious I think of your age sometimes.* (Teacher C, 1st interview)

Difficulties with colleagues and those with line management responsibilities surfaced in some of the open answers to the online questionnaires. For example, in the second questionnaire respondents were asked "What has frustrated you the most this year?" and of the 41 comments made, the largest number (11) were to do with other staff members, for example, "my department head" (respondent 6); "behaviour and attitude towards probationers. Mentors who do not want probationers and do not know what SFR [the Standard for Full Registration] is" (respondent 32).

Moreover, it is worth noting that none of the interviewees suggested the interview take place at their school. It seemed that the new teachers saw the interview as a personal issue in which they did not want to include their school. Issues of confidentiality and anonymity were important to them: several of the interviewees double checked about the anonymity of the research process which could be seen as emphasising their feelings of being vulnerable as a new teacher.

New teachers may be nervous of trying out new ideas in their class:

> *I think you can have like the confidence to actually do that [trying out new things], em, and to know that it's not the world's biggest disaster if something doesn't work, it's better to try it and find out a way of making it better than not to try it at all through being scared to try.* (Teacher J, 1st interview)

However, if new teachers have confidence in themselves, are able to be autonomous, they realise that this is a process that all teachers will experience:

> *I think people are very self-conscious of … oh, that went terrible, or wider than what other people are thinking but I realise, you know, it's, you know, whatever's just happened to you has most likely happened to every teacher, every teacher's went through the same thing and they've all got on with it, you just have to stay positive and just work hard, use your common sense a lot of the time* (Teacher D, 1st interview).

The support of their colleagues, their mentor and their head teacher all played a part in reducing the vulnerability of the new teachers.

2. How do practices in school learning environments reduce or increase new teachers' situational vulnerability?

In this section data relating to the new teachers' perceptions of their head teachers, mentors and colleagues is set out to show the reported expansive and restrictive features of their learning environments.

Head teachers have a role in making new teachers feel valued and included in the school and they are responsible for creating the conditions for expansive practices in the learning environment. While not asked directly about the head teacher in either of the questionnaires, in response to the question "What has frustrated you the most this year?" one teacher wrote

> *Lack of support from the head teacher until late on in the year has affected my confidence the most* (Respondent 18, 2nd questionnaire).

The interviewed teachers had mixed views on the support they had received from the head teacher in their school. Some had not expected very much support and so were pleasantly surprised by the support they received (Teacher C) while others felt that the head teacher treated them and other new teachers as inferior and they did not receive the support they expected (Teachers H and J) or that they were not quite trusted (Teacher E). One teacher felt undervalued by the head teacher who "uses us only as probationers", "I think we are kept in our place" and "We're not quite the same value as others" (Teacher J). The use of the word "probationer" by the head teacher at Teacher J's school is noteworthy as it can be seen

as a belittling term, focusing on the fact that the new teacher is on trial for a year and is not fully qualified. All the interviewees preferred the term induction year teacher.

While two of the new teachers were asked by the head teacher which class they would prefer to teach (Teachers C and F) the rest were simply told which class they would be teaching. Having no control or say over issues such as what class they teach, which days or hours they teach or have free for continuing professional development, and who their mentor is, show the new teachers that they have limited control over the organisation of the workplace. New teachers are not sure what to expect from their head teacher. If they do not receive the support they are expecting this will emphasise and entrench their vulnerability rather than lessen it.

> *There have been occasions when senior management have made me feel as if I'm still a student and that's quite disheartening, um, so, um…but it's quite difficult to then come back in with, um, a confidence to say, no actually I am a teacher, I do teach this class, I'm the one that organises everything, you know, and I plan … everything for the class, so it is my…I am a teacher. Um, so on occasion there have been, um, times when my confidence has been knocked* (Teacher H, 1st interview).

One of the main sources of support for the new teacher in the induction year in Scotland is meant to be the designated mentor. In this study the interviewed teachers experienced two different models of mentor support: the predominant model of a school-based mentor who may be the head teacher, depute head teacher, principal teacher or a classroom teacher, depending on the size of the school; and an alternative model of a centrally-based mentor whose job is to mentor ten to twelve new primary school teachers in a particular geographical area.

The variations, in terms of the support provided by in-school mentors, was highlighted in the questionnaires and then explored in more detail in the interviews. While one interviewee described the relationship with their mentor as excellent (teacher A), another found it difficult to meet their mentor and this meant the mentor relationship did not develop to the same extent as it did with other members of teaching staff (teacher J). Observations by the mentors were generally deemed to be supportive by the teachers, for example teacher A felt she gained confidence from the observations and feedback. There were, however, several issues related to the timing of meetings and feedback from observations (teachers B, E, F and G).

Both interviewees and questionnaire respondents referred to differing levels of support from

in-school and central mentors. Three of the four interviewed teachers with a central mentor would have preferred an in-school mentor. This may be connected to the importance given to informal aspects of learning over formal activities and an in-school mentor can be approached informally during the working day while contacting someone from outside the school will feel more formal for the new teacher, at least at the beginning of the school year. For someone in a position of situational vulnerability, with limited facilities and time in which to make and receive phone calls and/or emails, it may be harder to make contact with someone outside the workplace thus exacerbating their feelings of isolation and vulnerability.

Although mentors, whether in-school or out-of-school, were important to new teachers' learning in the workplace, it appeared that colleagues in general played a more central role in their learning. In many cases it was teachers who were teaching the same stage as the new teacher, or who had taught that stage previously who were the most supportive of the new teachers. Seven of the teachers in the second interview said the person they had learnt most from in their induction year was a fellow classroom teacher while two said it was their mentor.

Levels of support from colleagues varied between schools. The way new teachers were welcomed, supported or how they were made to feel inferior was different in each school. For example, how teachers responded to questions from the new teachers or how colleagues reacted to their suggestions at meetings:

> *When I notice it the most is like if we're having like an overall staff meeting, or like a stage meeting, erm, you try to like suggest things, it's kinda like, 'oh, that'll never work.'... But sometimes I feel like they don't, they're not open to new ideas or new suggestions sometimes. Some of them, not all of them, I can't speak for all them ... but sometimes I feel like they're almost against you.* (Teacher G, 1st interview).

This is in stark contrast to Teacher A, who was seen as having something to teach colleagues with a member of staff coming to watch one of their lessons to learn from them.

Having set out the findings in relation to new teachers' vulnerability and how they are treated in their schools by head teachers, mentors and other colleagues it is useful to consider the findings in relation to the literature.

Discussion

For many at the beginning of their first school year as a teacher, there is praxis or reality shock because it is the first time that they have to take full responsibility for a class of pupils (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002). The vulnerability of new teachers can be understood as multiple layers of new experiences to deal with – a new profession, perhaps a new location, probably a brand new workplace with new colleagues, new students, continuing assessment and uncertainty as to whether they will obtain a new post for the subsequent school year. New teachers are in a vulnerable situation as a newcomer to their profession while they continue to learn about teaching and how to be a teacher. They are not alone in feeling vulnerable, even experienced mentors can feel vulnerable in terms of their professional learning (Ponte and Twomey, 2014).

New teachers feel vulnerable as they are likely to experience some setbacks and criticisms, for example when they try out new ways of doing things in the classroom and when they receive feedback from an observation. They need successful relationships at work to build their self-esteem while they are 'being torn between experiences of success and the threat of vulnerability' (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002, p.111). The new teachers themselves recognised ways that they were vulnerable in terms of their knowledge and experience of school working practices, of teaching, their age and how they were treated by other members of staff.

In schools where teachers support each other, new teachers are on a more equal footing with their experienced colleagues and can be recognised as someone with a contribution to make to the school (Ulvik, Smith and Helleve, 2009). The inclusion and recognition of new teachers can reduce their vulnerability. There is more that head teachers could do to highlight what new teachers contribute to their schools (Fox, Wilson and Deaney, 2011). New teachers in supportive environments have been found to be more likely to seek advice and to overcome their doubts and difficulties more effectively (Greenlee and Dedeugd, 2002).

Misztal (2011) points to elements which are commonly found in definitions of vulnerability: weakness, defencelessness, helplessness and exposure (p.1). Situational vulnerability can produce these characteristics and it imposes a duty to respond on those who can assist and, in particular, on those to whom a person is most exposed, such as those who have power and authority over them. In the case of new teachers those who have power and authority over them are head teachers and induction year mentors. Head teachers, mentor and colleagues respond to new teachers' vulnerability in different ways and in these responses

we can determine expansive or restrictive practices in the learning environment (see Shanks and Robson (2012) on the contrasting learning environments of Teachers A and F). Expansive characteristics may include a head teacher who takes an interest in new teachers; supportive colleagues; and opportunities to learn both inside and outside the new teacher's own classroom. In a learning environment with more restrictive practices a new teacher may be denied learning opportunities because they are a temporary member of staff as happened with Teacher F. An expansive learning environment includes the new teacher, recognises their potential and thus responds to and alleviates some of their vulnerability.

Considering workplace learning in the expansive-restrictive model can encourage people to examine their perceptions of professional learning and development and, in particular, to regard development and learning as everyday activities in the workplace (Unwin and Fuller, 2003). In expansive learning environments professional development and professional learning are not confined to off-the-job events or specific training sessions at work. As well as learning from colleagues, new teachers bring their own knowledge and skills to the school. A school which appreciates its new teachers and uses their experiences is demonstrating expansive practice. Only one of the interviewees in the study had been approached by a colleague with the explicit purpose of the colleague learning from them. By making new teachers feel that they belong and by encouraging their experimentation schools can provide them with opportunities to cross boundaries and expand their practice (Fox, Wilson and Deaney, 2011). Below is a table of expansive and restrictive practices adapted from Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2005) for the specific context of new teachers in primary schools.

EXPANSIVE PRACTICES	RESTRICTIVE PRACTICES
Strong workplace learning infrastructure	Workplace learning conceived narrowly as "events"
Recognition by and support from the head teacher	Lack of recognition and support from the head teacher
Participation in multiple communities of practice inside and outside the workplace	Restricted participation in multiple communities of practice
Close collaborative working	Isolated, individualist working
Principal community of practice has shared "participative memory": cultural inheritance of new teacher support	Principal community of practice has little or no "participative memory": no or little tradition of new teacher support
Support from the mentor with timely and constructive feedback and regular meetings	Sporadic meetings with delays between observations and feedback
Colleagues mutually supportive in enhancing teacher learning	Colleagues obstruct or do not support each others' learning
An explicit focus on teacher learning, as a dimension of normal working practices	No explicit focus on teacher learning, except to meet crises or imposed initiatives
Breadth: access to learning fostered by cross-school experiences built into induction year	Narrow: access to learning restricted in terms of tasks/ knowledge/ location
Supported opportunities for personal development that	Teacher learning mainly strategic compliance with

goes beyond school or government priorities	government or school agendas
Out of school educational opportunities including time to stand back, reflect and think differently	Few out of school educational opportunities, only narrow, short training programmes
Opportunities to integrate off-the-job learning into everyday practice	No opportunity to integrate off-the-job learning
Opportunities to participate in more than one working group	Work restricted to stage teams within the school
Guaranteed time for continuing professional development (CPD) is protected	Protected CPD time is eaten into for class cover and other duties
Opportunity to extend professional identity through boundary crossing into other stages, school activities, schools and beyond.	School limits opportunity to extend identity: little boundary crossing experienced
Support for local variation in ways of working and learning for teachers and work groups.	Standardised approaches to teacher learning are prescribed and imposed.
Gradual transition to full participation	Fast transition
Teachers use a wide range of learning opportunities for themselves	Teachers use narrow range of learning approaches for their own learning
Induction year aim: rounded expert/ full participant and professional lifelong learner	Induction year aim: partial expert and completion of Standard for Full Registration
Post-induction year vision: progression for career	Post-induction year vision: static for job
Explicit institutional recognition of, and support for, new teacher's status as learner	Ambivalent institutional recognition of, and support for, new teacher's status as learner
Named individual acts as dedicated support to new teacher, even with centrally based mentor	No dedicated individual, ad-hoc support, in some cases very few mentor meetings
Induction year is used as a vehicle for aligning the goals of developing the individual and school capability	Induction year is used to tailor individual capability to school need
Reification of induction year highly developed (e.g. through documents, symbols, language, tools) and accessible to new teachers	Limited reification of induction year, patchy access to reificatory aspects of practice

Table 2 Expansive and restrictive practices in primary schools, based on Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2005, p.124.

Expansive primary schools like other expansive workplaces would regard new teachers as members of their community of practice, who can contribute ideas and share knowledge with colleagues (Unwin and Fuller, 2003, p.19). In a learning environment with expansive features the head teacher will, for example, have a strong workplace learning infrastructure in place, take an interest in new teachers, ensure that their guaranteed professional development time is protected and foster cross-school experiences and out-of-school educational opportunities for new teachers. In an expansive learning environment the induction mentor will be available to support the new teacher with time for meetings, observations and feedback. Similarly, colleagues will be mutually supportive and will work closely.

The analysis of workplace learning practices is a useful tool to identify ways to recognise, respond to and reduce new teachers' vulnerability and support their professional learning. An example of an expansive practice is the way the senior management team may enable rather than control the workforce while a restrictive practice is a narrow approach to learning

opportunities (Unwin and Fuller, 2003) such as not paying for temporary induction year teachers to go on a course. Workplaces which exhibit mostly expansive characteristics lie towards the expansive end of the expansive-restrictive continuum and, therefore, provide an expansive learning environment (ibid). For new teachers in Scotland in restrictive learning environments their circumstances may have changed little from those in the pre-2002 setup (see Draper, Fraser and Taylor, 1997).

Conclusion

New teachers are vulnerable learners. Their vulnerable situation should be acknowledged and responded to so that they are less susceptible to harm and have access to learning opportunities to enhance their self-esteem and develop themselves as the teachers they want to be. Although small scale this paper provides examples of new teachers' vulnerability such as their lack of knowledge of school working practices, their susceptibility to criticism and being treated differently to other staff. The paper shows how expansive practices in the school learning environment can support, facilitate and influence professional learning thus reducing the vulnerability of new teachers.

The induction year in Scotland is a uniquely exposed time for teachers who must attain the Standard for Full Registration and rely on a good reference from their head teacher for their future job prospects. The head teacher and (usually a school-based) mentor decide on the success, or otherwise, of the induction year and this places the new teacher in a vulnerable position in relation to those two individuals. To reduce this vulnerability head teachers and mentors should recognise their duty not only to respect new teachers' autonomy but to actively support and promote it. By creating expansive practices in the workplace learning environment head teachers can give new teachers the opportunities to take risks, to be autonomous and to learn. They can take the lead and show all school staff that new teachers are an integral part of the school and should be included in the everyday practices and workplace learning of the school irrespective of the fact that they are temporary employees.

A national induction scheme is only as good as its implementation in every school with a new teacher. By considering a school's learning environment it is possible to examine how the vulnerability of new teachers is responded to and whether it is recognised, reduced or exploited. The varying levels of support in schools can be understood as workplaces having

restrictive and/or expansive practices. The table of expansive and restrictive practices is a tool which can be used to determine the levels of support available to new teachers in prospective school workplaces. Further research would be useful to ascertain which expansive practices are most beneficial for lessening this situational vulnerability and sustaining new teacher learning, whether it is welcoming colleagues, collaborative practice, a lighter teaching load or guaranteed time with a mentor. In order to foster autonomous teachers it is necessary to recognise their situational vulnerability in the first year, at least, of teaching and do something to reduce it.

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