

PRIMARY PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

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PRIMARY PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

4TH EDITION

ALICE HANSEN





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10. Establishing your own teacher identity

Denis Hayes

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this chapter you will:

- understand how motivation for teaching influences your actions and decisions;
- have a clearer view of the kind of teacher you want to become;
- understand the meaning and significance of teacher identity;
- have learned how to develop as a reflective practitioner;
- understand the significance and impact of different teaching approaches;
- have gained an overview of professional responsibilities and development;
- have learned about appropriate conduct and behaviour on school placement.

TEACHERS' STANDARDS

A teacher must:

- 1. Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils**
 - demonstrate consistently the positive attitudes, values and behaviour which are expected of pupils.
- 2. Promote good progress and outcomes by pupils**
 - demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how pupils learn and how this impacts on teaching
 - encourage pupils to take a responsible and conscientious attitude to their own work and study.
- 8. Fulfil wider professional responsibilities**
 - make a positive contribution to the wider life and ethos of the school
 - develop effective professional relationships with colleagues, knowing how and when to draw on advice and specialist support
 - take responsibility for improving teaching through appropriate professional development, responding to advice and feedback from colleagues.

Motivation for teaching

What kind of teacher do you want to be is a question frequently posed by tutors and lecturers to their trainees. Answers invariably include reference to attributes such as being kind, fair

and caring; to skills such as being a good listener; and to general aims such as helping children to learn and reach their potential. These aspirations provide a core set of beliefs for teachers and yet, in practice, some teachers are more successful than others, which raises a number of issues, not least whether everyone has the potential to be a teacher – or only those who have natural talent.

Every study shows that people become primary teachers because they love to work with children; as such, they are almost invariably very fond of the children in their care and, like a responsible parent, want to do everything possible to ensure each child's welfare. Primary teaching has traditionally been a female-orientated profession and teachers historically see themselves as substitute parents with moral responsibility for children. More recently, there has been an increase in the number of men working with primary age children and, to a lesser extent, the early years' sector (children 3 to 5 years of age).

The fact that primary teachers care deeply about children is indicated by the frequent reference they make to 'my' children. Such affection is not confined to the working day but taken home every evening, occupying minds and actions to such an extent that over time the emotional demands, coupled with the physical exertion and long working days, can lead to mental and physical fatigue. Although teaching primary age children is fun and challenging, you must learn to pace yourself and build your expertise and effectiveness gradually, aided by tutors, colleagues, your own studies and constantly thinking about ways to improve.

Teacher self-identity

In addition to the centrality of altruistic (wanting to help others) motives on their desire to teach, primary teachers tend to judge their own worth as persons in terms of their success at work. As a result, failings in school – whether real or imagined – affect every aspect of their lives. While teachers are always interested in finding ways to boost the self-esteem of children, it is also important that they pay attention to enhancing their own confidence and *self-identity*.

A number of factors influence self-identity: competence and skill level; affirmation by others; practical support from more experienced colleagues; and last but not least, moral conviction, including religious faith, driven by a deep-seated conviction that your teaching makes a positive difference to children's lives. It is often stated that 'schools exist for kids'; while that statement is obviously true, it is also the case that schools are places where large numbers of adults work, each of whom deserves to be nurtured and valued.

Mullen (2007) suggests that the construction of teacher identity is largely affective (the power to move the emotions) and that an investigation of the emotional components of the job helps in an understanding of the teacher's self-identity. Your emotions control the extent to which you will resist or embrace advice and change affects your professional growth; as such, the way you handle your feelings strongly influences your development as a teacher.

Activity

Use the following list as a basis for considering what kind of teacher you want to become.

1. Well-informed about the subjects I teach.
2. Kind and compassionate towards children and colleagues.
3. Approachable, pleasant and responsive.
4. Good listener and communicator.
5. Keen sense of humour.
6. Clear in explaining things to children.
7. Patient but decisive.
8. Make fair judgements.
9. Make sensible decisions.
10. Careful time manager.
11. Clear about what I want children to learn.
12. Willing to respond positively children's genuine interests and questions.
13. Team player and cooperative.
14. Offer positive comments and suggestions.
15. Take account of criticism from others and act appropriately.
16. Take every opportunity to encourage my colleagues.
17. Now make a list of the characteristics you want to avoid.

Values and teaching

It is helpful to think of education as being grounded in five fundamental values: spiritual, cultural, environmental, aesthetic and political. Each of these values is expressed in terms of your *personal* values with regard to self; your *moral* values with regard to others; and your *social* values with regard to the community in which you are placed. For instance, one of your personal values might be to treat others as you wish to be treated; a moral value might be to listen carefully and respond compassionately to colleagues' concerns; a social value might be to volunteer for an after-school club in a desire to contribute expertise for the benefit of others.

Eaude (2006) argues that 'the person' as a teacher cannot be separated from the person you are at all other times. As a result, the values that you bring to the classroom, through your personality, enthusiasm, emotions and priorities, combine to influence children and affect their feelings of self-worth and desire to learn. The relationship (bond) between you and the children is therefore an essential factor in determining your success as a teacher. Children respond well to adults who relate to them naturally and are always approachable. No amount of posturing and forcefulness on your part will compensate for establishing and maintaining caring relations with the children for whom you have responsibility. See also Chapter 5 in this book.

Teacher identity and integrity

Studies about teachers' professional identity indicate that we must pay careful attention to: (a) the relationship between concepts of 'self' and 'identity'; (b) the importance of what counts as 'professional' in professional identity; (c) the impact of the educational setting in shaping identity; and (d) the place of emotions, temperament and personality. In 1997, P.J. Palmer wrote an influential article in which he defines identity and integrity (Palmer, 1997a). Thus, identity is described as:

An evolving nexus {set of connections} where all the forces that constitute my life converge in the mystery of self: my genetic makeup, the nature of the man and woman who gave me life, the culture in which I was raised, people who have sustained me and people who have done me harm, the good and ill I have done to others, and to myself, the experience of love and suffering ...

In similar vein he explores the related characteristic of integrity:

Integrity requires that I discern what is integral to my selfhood, what fits and what does not – and that I choose life-giving ways of relating to the forces that converge within me. Do I welcome them or fear them, embrace them or reject them, move with them or against them?

Palmer goes on to say that by choosing integrity, you become more whole, but that wholeness does not mean that you never make mistakes. He identifies the relationship between the two qualities of identity and integrity such that identity lies in the diverse forces that make up a life, whereas integrity consists of forces that bring the person wholeness and life rather than fragmentation and deadness. (See also Palmer, 1997b.)

Activity

Think of three teachers you have known well and evaluate their identity and integrity as outlined by Palmer (1997a). List the sorts of key decisions you need to make and priorities you need to establish as you seek to develop your own identity and integrity as a teacher.

Adopting a reflective approach

As the prime satisfaction for most primary teachers is the pleasure of interacting with children and positively affecting their lives – rather than a desire for monetary rewards or status – a teacher's value position is rooted in a need to cherish, serve, empower and benefit the children in their care. As a result, primary teachers constantly need to evaluate their work regarding

the fundamental purpose of what they are doing as educators and the daily task of translating those beliefs into practical teaching. A key ambition in your professional life should be to become a 'reflective practitioner', both during lessons (reflecting 'in' teaching) and following teaching sessions (reflecting 'on' teaching).

Activity

If you haven't done so already, begin the reflective process by keeping a record of your classroom experiences (for example, assessing how clearly you communicate ideas and instructions to children) under four main headings.

1. What I did: e.g. *I explained how children should set out their work.*
2. Why I did it: e.g. *I wanted to improve the appearance of their written work.*
3. What was good about it: e.g. *I spoke slowly and carefully and answered their queries using child-friendly language. My pedagogical knowledge was good.*
4. What could have been improved: e.g. *I need to ensure that every child is paying attention before I speak.*

Your personal values and ideas about priorities in education and life more widely have a strong impact on shaping classroom practice, as you encourage children to respect other viewpoints, speak plainly but courteously, collaborate, weigh up situations, summarise key points, evaluate options and communicate ideas carefully in a supportive (non-judgemental) way.

Research Focus: Teachers as reflective practitioners

Larrivee (2008) reviewed the research on creating a learning climate conducive to facilitating the development of teachers as reflective practitioners and concluded that the process involves a willingness to be an active participant in professional growth. The author argues that the aim of reflective practice is to think critically about one's teaching choices and actions. Consequently, reflective practice involves teachers questioning the goals, values and assumptions that guide their work and entails interrogating the way things are done, the purpose of education and the contexts in which learning takes place. See also Ghaye and Ghaye (1998).

Motivating the children

Your enthusiasm for a subject is important but is not of itself a sufficiently strong factor to ensure that children are motivated to learn. You also need empathy, compassion, commitment, patience, spontaneity and an ability to make sound judgements to produce what is sometimes

described as ‘loving relations’ in the classroom. O’Quinn and Garrison (2004) argue that by nurturing loving recognition and by being brave enough to take risks in learning to allow for children’s own shortcomings and vulnerabilities, you can help to develop a tolerant, harmonious and caring learning climate. Children are not only impressed by your knowledge and teaching skills but also by human qualities such as your patience, kindness and encouraging manner.

Values education

A good education is founded on developing the human personality in all its dimensions – intellectual, physical, social, ethical and moral (Sridhar, 2001). Thornberg (2008) argues that *values education* does not depend on following a planned programme of work but is often unplanned and should be embedded in everyday school life. In common with Palmer (see earlier), Thornburg argues that values reflect the personal concerns and preferences that help to frame relationships between children and adults. In other words, your effectiveness as a teacher has as much to do with the heart (emotions) as with the mind (intellect). In practice, teachers use this spontaneity in conjunction with the curriculum to enhance the social and emotional aspects of learning, usually referred to as SEAL.

The values that you bring to the classroom should be the result of careful and informed thinking, as you seek to dovetail your personal morality (inner beliefs) with impartial justice (fair to all). The reason for taking such care is well expressed by Richards when he refers to the teacher as a ‘frighteningly significant person whose teaching helps to shape attitudes to learning at a most sensitive period in children’s development’ (2009, p.20). While most children grow up to develop competent moral skills, a small number of them fail to do so and cultivate a highly sophisticated form of deviance (Rossano, 2008). In the light of this trend, the author recommends the promotion of deliberate moral practice, suggesting that religious participation provides the basic elements to facilitate it.

You must decide how best to inculcate children into behaving appropriately, while resisting the temptation to give the impression that your way is the *only* way – their parents may have different ideas. For example, you might impress on the children that bullying is wrong, while some parents might be telling them to ‘stand up for themselves’, even at the expense of others’ suffering. Whatever you discuss or declare, it pays to be aware that children often repeat at home things they hear you say in school, so be clear with them about what is right and wrong but be cautious about imposing your own morality on them in a way that might invite criticism.

Developing your teaching approach

Factors influencing your teaching

A teaching approach consists of the methods and strategies that teachers employ to help children learn effectively and reflect the beliefs that practitioners hold about the nature of

learning and education in general. Thus, one teacher might believe that children learn best when they are motivated by opportunities to explore ideas as a group, while another teacher may be convinced that they learn best when working individually. Again, one teacher may employ a considerable amount of direct teaching, utilising question-and-answer supported by repetition of facts, while another teacher prefers a problem-solving method in which children are encouraged to raise their own questions and seek their own solutions. One teacher's style may be informal and strongly interactive, using humour and good-natured banter, while another teacher might adopt a more detached and serious manner. Many teachers vary their approach depending on the subject area; thus, an investigative science session might involve a large percentage of group work whereas a phonics lesson will probably be geared towards a more systematic, teacher-led approach.

As a trainee teacher, you will gradually develop your own style of teaching, influenced by five factors: (a) your evolving beliefs about effective teaching and learning; (b) the approach that works best for you; (c) the influence of more experienced teachers; (d) the approach that children seem to enjoy best; (e) the approach the regular teacher uses with the children. The final point is important – if you are on school placement and attempt to use a significantly different approach from the usual teacher, the children might struggle to understand your intentions and what is expected of them. It is better to observe the regular teacher's methods and closely follow them for a time before gradually introducing small changes of your own.

Whatever teaching approach you adopt, teaching primary age children relies heavily on the creation and maintenance of a bond of trust and mutual respect between adult and child. You need to have insight into the things that children find significant if you want to create effective communication networks that will enhance learning and maintain good relations. Children appreciate adults who are fair, interested in them as individuals, transparent in their dealings, clear about their intentions, helpful in their explanations, non-judgemental in their attitude yet unflinching in confronting unsatisfactory situations. They benefit from teachers who are prepared to listen carefully to what children say to them, which enhances self-esteem, motivation and academic success. Your positive attitude, enthusiasm and high expectations can make a considerable difference in the way that children view learning, their behaviour and the extent to which they are willing to persevere.

Research Focus: Views of teaching

An interesting insight into primary teachers' views of teaching was exposed by Taylor (2002) who found that out of a group of 55 experienced teachers, over 80 per cent of them opted for an approach that can be broadly defined as 'child-centred' (Doddington and Hilton, 2007, p.34), defined as follows.



- Learning comes naturally to children.
- Children/students learn because they want to learn and not because they are told to do so.
- Play and work are indistinguishable.
- Learning is a communal activity rather than individual.
- The main aim of teaching is to develop the whole person (academic, social, spiritual).
- The curriculum should be related to the child's or student's needs.
- The teacher should encourage children to develop their own mode of learning.

Child-centred philosophy

Taylor (2002) – see Research Focus above – notes that the results of his research are almost identical to those carried out among primary teachers some 25 years earlier (Ashton et al., 1975). Only about one-fifth of the teachers in Taylor's sample group aligned themselves with a view encapsulated in the ideology promoted in recent years, notably that:

1. Real learning cannot possibly be easy.
2. Children must be made to work rather than do so out of interest.
3. Play is not work unless it is highly structured and controlled by adults.
4. Learning is an individual matter.
5. The main aim of teaching is to develop the intellect, not the emotions.
6. The curriculum should relate to the needs of society.
7. The teacher's job is to motivate and direct learning rather than involve children.

Instead, Taylor's findings that the majority of teachers preferred a child-centred approach reflected research carried out among aspiring teachers in England by Hayes (2004) and in Australia (Manuel and Hughes, 2006). Manuel and Hughes concluded that many prospective teachers enter teaching 'with a sense of mission to transform the lives of young people and open opportunities for growth through learning and connecting' (p.21).

Activity

To what extent do each of the seven principles based on the work of Taylor (2002) reflect your own view of teaching and learning? Take each principle in turn and for each one select from: agree strongly/agree/tend to disagree/disagree strongly. Discuss your conclusions with others.

Continuous professional development

Teachers are required to undergo continuous professional development (CPD) from the moment they enter a course of training until they retire from the job. CPD is defined as the systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and skills, together with the development of personal qualities, all of which are necessary for the execution of professional and practical responsibilities throughout a working life. See Chapter 15 for further discussion on CPD. Qualified teachers commonly refer to CPD as *in-service training* or INSET as they are developing expertise ‘on the job’. Over time, you are expected to expand your subject knowledge; improve your organisation and management of teaching; learn new skills (e.g. specific uses of information technology) and increasingly contribute to the school’s academic performance and attractiveness – especially to parents. Great teachers are forged from a combination of inspiration and perspiration; you need a substantial amount of *both* qualities.

Newly qualified primary teachers tend to use the teaching approach that they developed during training or modelled on a teacher whom they admire. As they progress, teachers gradually extend the reaches of their experience, focus their energies more efficiently and become more upbeat about school life, though a few older members of staff grow bitter and cynical. As a new teacher, you are advised to avoid being drawn into negative conversations with pessimistic colleagues. Instead, smile, nod and quickly find something else to do.

Reflecting in and on action

As noted earlier, you need to improve your competence through a process of self-evaluation in two ways: (a) at the end of a lesson or series of lessons (reflection *on* action), and (b) during the lesson (reflection *in* action). In other words, you must not only take time to ‘stand back’ at the end of the session but be mentally active throughout the session(s) in evaluating your role and assessing how well the children responded to what you said to them and concentrated on their allocated work.

It is helpful to reflect *on* action by asking two key questions: (1) How well did I undertake and exercise my responsibilities as teacher? (2) How well did the children learn? The second question is more difficult to answer than the first because learning is never smooth and uninterrupted; most children learn a little, forget a little, become confused for a time then understand better, grapple with imponderables and gradually digest knowledge as they think and talk about ideas and reinforce their tentative understanding by asking questions, practising skills and exploring problems.

The model of teaching and learning that advocates a linear progression – *Teach ... learn ... evaluate learning and modify the next lesson ... teach ... learn* and so on – fails to take account of

the complexity of the learning process and the need for constant reinforcement. Assessing and evaluating a small portion of work, followed by allocating grades or giving marks to represent attainment, is deceptively appealing. You *do* need to evaluate children's progress – and giving a grade or mark can be useful, providing they understand its significance – but you also need to recognise that learning is complex and cannot be reduced to a simple formula. See Chapter 5 in this book for further details.

Reflection *in* action presents its own challenges, not least the fact that it takes place during the lesson at a time when you have so much else to consider. Nevertheless, you will need to discipline yourself to think on your feet, evaluate your teaching spontaneously and make decisions about a range of issues, including:

- the length of time you spend on each part of the lesson (lesson phase);
- the length of time you spend assisting each child or group of children;
- the way that you respond to children's questions;
- the way that you handle instances of indiscipline;
- the standard of work that you accept from children;
- the opportunities you offer for children to explore ideas, investigate and discover new knowledge for themselves.

It is normal for inexperienced teachers to spend more time reflecting *on* action than *in* action. However, over time and with perseverance, you will find it easier to keep a 'mental running commentary', as you rapidly evaluate your actions and the children's responses and make rapid adjustments to what you say and do. It pays to concentrate on one or two aspects of your classroom practice at a time. For example, during one lesson you might make a conscious effort to differentiate the questions you use to ensure that less capable children can respond to simpler ones and more capable children have to think hard about tough ones; in a second lesson, you might pay particular attention to the nature of pupil feedback and your use of praise.

Professional advancement

The need for teachers to provide evidence that children have benefited directly from their teaching has been integral to career advancement, so teachers have to be able to point to measurable and verifiable aspects of pupil learning. Most teachers take advantage of internal promotion opportunities in the school but only a very small number become head teachers. See Neil and Morgan (2003) and Bubb (2004) for an overview of issues attached to professional progression across a career. The National College for School Leadership in England established in 2000 – now known as the National College for Teaching and Leadership – prepared and trained aspiring subject leaders, deputy head teachers and head teachers. This signalled that professional advancement was increasingly dependent on

external forms of verification. See Chapter 15 for more about professional advancement. Now, the focus of the NCTL, an executive agency sponsored by the DfE, aims to improve the quality of the education and early years workforce and encourage schools to help each other improve. NCTL works with schools to develop an education system supported locally by partnerships and led by the best head teachers (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-college-for-teaching-and-leadership/about>).

Professional responsibilities

In recent years, a lot of legislation has been passed specific to the role of teachers that has had an impact on the way that they relate to children in school. A teacher's responsibility for pupil welfare has grown beyond the original standard of *in loco parentis* (standing in the place of the parent). Depending on the age of the children, the person or persons with a primary duty of care must ensure that all reasonable precautions have been taken to protect and safeguard their welfare (Nixon, 2007).

There has been a substantial increase in the amount of litigation in society generally and this trend has influenced the work of adults in school. Consequently, all teachers are obliged to keep abreast of the way in which laws and codes of practice impact upon their behaviour. Teachers must also conform to their professional duties as required by the head teacher, in line with their contracts of employment. A refusal to do so can be interpreted as a breach of contract and invite disciplinary procedures. All new teachers receive a letter of appointment from the school governors/school board specifying matters such as salary, duties and tenure.

Teachers' professional values and practice includes having high expectations of every pupil, respecting a child's social, cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic backgrounds, and showing wholehearted concern for their academic and social development. The establishment of standards for qualified teacher status and what amounts to a national scheme for teacher training is intended to maintain overall competence.

The need for an acceptable standard of teacher behaviour is discussed in detail in Chapter 8. It is important because primary teachers act as models or examples to their children and local communities. General Teaching Councils (GTCs) in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland exist to promote a sense of collegiality and consistency across the teaching profession. However, the GTC (England) was disbanded in 2010. Teachers are bound by formal and implicit codes of ethics that specify how they are to fulfil their duties and obligations with respect to the education they provide. Teachers can be reprimanded for misdemeanours as diverse as repeatedly failing to hand in planning and assessment files to the head teacher for monitoring; demonstrating overt insensitivity to children; or using inappropriate language in front of children and colleagues.

To avoid problems, make every effort to be positive about life in general, avoid complaining and listen respectfully to the things that children and colleagues say. At all cost, avoid any trace of arrogance or giving the impression to staff that you can manage perfectly well on your own and don't need their advice. You can enhance your reputation by arriving in good time for school, staying behind to complete tasks, being courteous and pleasant to colleagues, using your time productively during the day and persevering to improve your teaching skills.

School placement issues

A significant part of a teacher training course is time spent on school placement. To make the best use of these periods you need to do a lot of thinking and preparation before and during the placement. Before you begin, you will be given plenty of advice by tutors and allocated tasks that you must undertake during the time in school. There is nearly always a lot of paperwork to complete, so grit your teeth and get on with it! In the case of extended placements, it is normal to make a preliminary visit to the school or educational setting to meet staff and children and become familiar with the set-up. Don't forget to be friendly, smile a lot and reassure the host teacher by your positive but mature attitude that you will be an asset and not a liability.

During the placement, it takes time to adjust to a new situation, so don't be discouraged if you struggle and feel a bit overwhelmed, especially during the first few days. Hayes (2009) suggests that however hard you work and however sincere is your level of commitment, the time you spend on placement in school is always going to be challenging as well as rewarding. The placement provides opportunities for you to hone your teaching skills and learn about the various teacher roles, supported by a tutor and the school staff. One of the most important things to do is to learn the children's names. Another is to clarify with the teacher/tutor/mentor precisely what is expected of you, when you will be taking responsibility and what you need to prepare. A third is to show a willingness to 'get stuck in'. Don't try to endear yourself to the children by being overfamiliar; you can be friendly without compromising your teacher status.

As the placement begins and you do more teaching, you will discover that a variety of practical factors over which you have no control interfere with your carefully laid plans; for example, the school may have a special event that requires time-consuming rehearsals or a special visitor might arrive causing a session to be curtailed at short notice. Occasionally, the regular teacher is ill or absent for other reasons and you have to negotiate with one or more substitute teachers, which tends to delay or accelerate your rise to stardom. Your reaction to unexpected twists and turns reveals a lot about your suitability for teaching, so try to be flexible and view such difficulties as opportunities rather than annoying hindrances. Save your complaining for when you meet your friends in the evening.

Research Focus: Issues facing new teachers

Research carried out by Jacklin et al. (2006) about the issues faced by new primary teachers indicated that one of the greatest challenges was taking full responsibility for the whole class, including establishing and enforcing boundaries of behaviour, pupil safety, registration, liaising with parents, and so on. Trainee teachers are partially protected from this all-encompassing role but still need to recognise that there is more to being a teacher than teaching lessons. The authors go on to say that differentiated teaching, supporting and extending the least and most able children, and above all, setting high expectations and standards for all, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, race, disability or social background, are all part of the day-to-day role of a primary teacher.

The majority of placements are satisfactory or better; occasionally a placement is disappointing, either because you receive inadequate support, guidance and help from the host teacher/mentor or for some unaccountable reason you don't get on with the children. In such cases it is important to do your best to stay positive, refuse to countenance failure and make constructive use of your tutor and mentor. The reality is that although occasional setbacks are inevitable, they can be used as an incentive to do better and do not spell the end of your teaching career. Use the Activity on p.200 as a guide for evaluating your progress.

Case Study

Two trainee teachers, who had spent time in separate schools as part of their teaching placement, reflected on ways in which their professional development had been affected by widely differing experiences. In the first example, Chris explains how she persevered with an unpromising situation. In the second example, Emma describes her 'dream placement' in a school where pupil behaviour was good and she felt welcomed by the host teachers. The case studies are in the trainees' own words.

Chris (working with Year 5 children)

The placement didn't get off to a very good start because in my first meeting with the teacher/tutor, she confessed that she had not really wanted another trainee, so I felt like an intruder. I worked with a group of children whose classroom and learning behaviour was very challenging. They were hard to motivate and showed little interest in the work they were given to do. Many of them seemed to have switched off from school altogether. Several children had serious learning difficulties that were not recognised or being addressed by the teacher or catered for in lessons. A small group of unsettled and uncooperative children dominated much of teacher's attention throughout the

school day with the result that other children's needs were not being well met. The classroom environment was poor and uncared for; for instance, there was minimal work on display and children's work was often left unmarked, just lying around gathering dust. Unfortunately, my college tutor was off sick during much of the placement and the school was a long way from the university, so I felt very isolated. There was so much that I wanted to learn, see and do, but owing to the challenging conditions much remains unseen and undone. So, overall this placement was not what I had hoped for at all but in a way I learned more than in my previous school where the children were lovely, the teachers were highly supportive and I was made very welcome. The most important lesson I learned was that I have inner reserves of strength that I didn't know I possessed. I made up my mind to be the very best teacher I could possibly be in the circumstances and refused to become negative or cynical, though there were times of intense frustration. I also became aware of the sort of teacher I definitely did not want to become. Mind you, I still hope my final school placement is easier than the one I've just finished. It would have been easy to imagine that everything was my fault when in fact I think I coped well and made good progress despite the situation. Even so, I envy those some of my friends who didn't have to endure the inner turmoil, strains and stresses that I experienced. Emotions play such a powerful role in teaching, so being unsettled in school has an adverse effect on every other part of your life, too.

Emma (working with Reception children)

I was really fortunate with my placement in that I was quickly able to fit in really well with staff at the school and soon became regarded and treated like a fellow teacher and colleague. The class teacher and the two teaching assistants I worked with were highly skilled, supportive and cheerful. They gave me loads of ideas, resources and assistance with my small-scale research I had to do as part of the placement about ways that children learn through play. I felt myself grow in confidence and become a member of the team rather than a trainee teacher sitting in the corner of the room! Having such positive support and encouragement meant that the class felt like my own and as a result the children responded well to me.

Support from my class teacher really helped me when I was uncertain or struggling with an issue, as she offered advice in a constructive and pleasant way. I was never afraid to approach her even when I mucked things up, as she always tried to be positive instead of moaning. One unexpected bonus from being accepted as a teacher was the fact that parents increasingly came to me and asked about their children's progress. I was thrilled when some of the parents told me how excited their children were about what I was teaching them in school. My school mentor was very experienced and I felt 100 per cent confident about his guidance (unlike my previous school experiences). He was kind, supportive and caring, which made it my favourite placement of the year. I intend to make sure that I'm as supportive to the trainees that come into my classroom when I'm qualified.

The above instances show that both trainees developed their expertise and sense of self in different ways. In the first case, the trainee had to draw on her inner strength and belief and learn to be self-reliant in an unpromising situation. In the second case, the trainee had the luxury of a supportive environment and well-behaved children.

Activity

1. What were the different professional challenges facing Chris and Emma?
2. In what ways might Chris have made more progress as a teacher than Emma?
3. What sort of factors combined to create the 'inner turmoil' described by Chris?

All teachers can be persuaded that you are an asset if they see that you respond to their advice, strive to do your best and do not threaten their way of working (Hayes, 2003). Despite any reservations you may hold, try to view the teacher as your ally and strive to keep channels of communication open. Stay positive, focus on the children's learning, listen to advice, do your best to implement it and keep paperwork up to date. Thankfully, the large majority of trainee teachers enjoy their placements, though moments of uncertainty and self-doubt are inevitable. Be encouraged that the vast majority of trainees are successful and complete the time in school feeling much more like Emma than like Chris.

Activity

Evaluate your professional progress using the following coding: (1) Progressing well, (2) Progressing satisfactorily, (3) Requiring attention, (4) Requiring urgent attention.

- a) I am being positive about my situation and avoid moaning.
- b) I am maintaining open communication with colleagues, especially the class teacher.
- c) I am listening carefully to advice.
- d) I am thoughtfully acting upon advice.
- e) I am being friendly, courteous and warm towards others.
- f) I am acting in a considerate and caring manner.
- g) I am preparing and evaluating lessons thoroughly.
- h) I am maintaining necessary paperwork, including assessment of pupil progress.
- i) I am reflecting on my teaching during lessons and after the session.
- j) I am interacting with parents and keeping them informed.
- k) I am becoming familiar with school policies for safeguarding children.
- l) I am taking opportunities for leisure and recreation to 'recharge my batteries'.

Learning Outcomes Review

Thinking about the school in which you are working or recently worked, respond to the prompts after each intended learning outcome, to identify your knowledge and understanding of the issues covered in the chapter.

- **To understand how motivation for teaching influences your actions and decisions:**
 - What sort of a teacher do you want to be and why?
- **To have a clearer view of the kind of teacher you want to become:**
 - What values and personal qualities are essential for teaching?
- **To understand the meaning and significance of teacher identity:**
 - How will you go about motivating and encouraging children?
- **To learn how to develop as a reflective practitioner:**
 - What strategies will you use to safeguard your own wellbeing and identity as a person?
- **To understand the significance and impact of different teaching approaches:**
 - What forms of evidence will you use to show that you are improving as a teacher?
- **To gain an overview of professional responsibilities and development:**
 - What factors will guide your decisions about a suitable teaching approach?
- **To learn about appropriate conduct and behaviour on school placement:**
 - What impression do you want to give while you are on school placement to (a) the regular teacher (b) the children (c) the parents?

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