

Reflection on becoming a teacher



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

I have always had aspirations to be a Primary teacher. Although I am relatively new to the profession I am]

However despite the challenges that face me I am trying to remain positive and make the best out of this situation

Before I started writing I felt the best start way to reflect on my practice was to conduct a ...

SWOT

Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities Threats) to analyse my CPD opportunities in a way to focus on my goals and reflect on my practice so far. (See Appendix 1) By doing this I was able to highlight what I believe to be important and factors that I would like to improve on. I will now look at the political issues affecting education in Scotland, current research and how each have had an impact on my own learning. From this I will then review my position and set my goals for the future.

The Political Position

Harold Wilson the former Labour P. M. once said:

“ A week is a long time in politics”

First Minister Alex Salmond discovered to his dismay the meaning of this quote in the first week of December last year. On Tuesday the 1st December 2009 Fiona Hyslop was redeployed from her position as Education secretary marking the first change in the Scottish Government Cabinet since the SNP came into power over two years ago. (Swanson 2009) The question is what happened?

Alex Salmond made this decision only days after the Scottish government statistics showed a fall in teacher numbers of 1, 348 over the past year, despite his plea to increase them. Fiona Hyslop has suffered a lot of criticism as education secretary the main reason being her failure to deliver the SNP's biggest education pledge of lowering primary 1-3 class sizes to 18. The final straw was Ms Hyslop threatening to centralise education taking power away from local authorities. The opposition parties also threatened a " vote of no confidence" in the Education Secretary if the First Minister did not do something to deal with the situation- a threat that could not be taken lightly. (Macleod 2009)

By the 8th of December the SNP Government and the new Education Secretary Mike Russell faced its first challenge - an enquiry into the class sizes pledge a major part of the SNP 2007 manifesto was called into question of whether or not the pledge was deliverable in their time in office.

As if the current situation wasn't bad enough on the 11th Dec 2009 the General Teaching council published their report of probationers gaining employment after their initial year and their findings were not encourage able. The report stated that out of teachers surveyed only one teacher in five (20. 2%) gained a full time permanent job after completing probation this summer and a significantly greater number of new teachers more than 1 in 4 have been able to gain employment as a teacher at all. Commenting on this report EIS General Secretary Ronnie Smith said " The fact that so many of our newly qualified teachers are unemployed or under-employed on very patchy, short-term, contracts is a tragedy not only for these individual teachers but also for Scottish education and its pupils". (EIS 2009)

<https://assignbuster.com/reflection-on-becoming-a-teacher/>

Current Research and Personal Experiences

“ Every aspect of being a teacher draws on both your professional and personal resources and values”

(Moyle and Robinson 2002 cited Asprey, Hamilton and Haywood 2002)

Watzke (2007) amongst others talks of stage theory in teaching stating that there are distinct changes in a teachers thinking throughout his or her career. Fuller (1969) was one of the first to comment on this matter and suggests that in the beginning teachers are not concerned about teaching but their own survival. This stage known as “ self concerns” e. g.. Can they survive and pass their probationary year? Later in their career Fuller stated the focus is on “ actual performance as teachers” calling this stage “ task concerns.” This makes sense as it is only natural once you have confidence in yourself to then focus on improving your learning experiences. The last stage after successful teaching the focus then moves on to “ having a meaningful and positive influence on their pupils” which is known as “ impact concerns”. As teachers learn and grow in the teaching profession they learn what works and what does not and this is something that comes from experience therefore it makes sense to follow a path like Fuller suggested. All teachers are very different and each have their own unique “ learning style”. However, one thing what I would hope all teachers would have a shared value is the belief that the children are the most important part of their job and is their job as teachers to get the best out of the children they teach.

As humans we all have our own values as individuals and as teachers. Eisner and Vallance (1974) talk of three main dimensions on which varied value positions are held. They suggest that that they are best represented as continua:

Individual society

This is the concept of whether education should be geared to meet individuals' needs rather than educational terms being planned to meet the needs of the society.

values skills

This is the concept of whether education should focus on developing individuals' sense of values in a moral ethical context, or on developing their skills.

adaptive reconstructive

This is whether education should prepare children to fit into the present society, or strive to change and in turn changing society.

(Eisner and Vallance 1975 cited in Pollard 2005)

By looking at these three dimensions, we can perhaps see where our own values fit in. Pollard (2005) like Watzke (2007) talks of how teachers change and adapt as they gain more experience throughout their career. Pollard (2007) uses this example; a newly qualified or student teacher may place their self at the “ individual” extreme of the first dimension placing more importance on skills extreme and feel more comfortable with the “ adaptive” extreme of the third dimension. However, as time goes on and more experience is gained opinions may change.

<https://assignbuster.com/reflection-on-becoming-a-teacher/>

Being on supply I am able to see good practice in many different schools in my area. I also have the opportunity to be flexible and work in different establishments Nursery, Primary and the Additional Support Needs (ASN) sector. Working on supply you get to know particular schools and soon realise the schools that are nice to work in and the ones you may want to steer clear of. The question is how do we know this? What makes something feel like this? I think what it comes down to is the culture of each individual school.

“ Culture is both a dynamic phenomenon that surrounds us at all times, being constantly enacted and created by our interactions with others” (Schein 2004 p1)

Every organisation whether they realise it or not has their own unique culture. Being in so many different schools you come across just how different the working environment can be from school to school. The tricky part is being able to gauge the culture and act accordingly because what wouldn't be an issue in one school could be in another. The most popular example is the staff room. If it is my first time working in a particular school you have to gauge the environment and try to follow suit for example the seating arrangements, the biggest mistake you can make is to sit on someone else's seat if this happens you may either depending on the school get asked to move or be given the evil eye for the rest of the day. Another example especially in a big staffroom is when you sit down and other groups come in after and sit in little groups and you are left in the middle on your own twiddling your thumbs. To be on the safe side I usually wait until everyone is in the staffroom and then ask is it ok to sit in a particular seat. Sometimes you ask “ Is it ok to sit here?” To which the reply will be “ Oh

yes you don't need to worry, we don't have particular seats in here" but then you realise that every break time and lunch all of the staff remain in the same seats. Therefore culture is so in built they don't even realise it's there but from an outsiders point of view it is more apparent.

Once you've got your seat the next obstacle is talking to people. As soon as you walk in to a staffroom you can immediately sense the ambience, it is hard to explain but it is very apparent. As noted above you soon realise what schools you prefer to be in and those you aren't as keen on, because in some schools you are " only the supply teacher" and you can sit and be ignored. On the other hand you walk in to some schools and you immediately feel a good atmosphere and although you still go through the same ritual in the staffroom asking where to sit you don't feel as apprehensive as the staff talk to you and make you feel welcome and generally seem interested in you as a person.

Although I don't currently have a base school I do have schools where I work in more often. One such school is the school I worked in during my probationary year. Looking back it is funny how your first impressions of a place can be somewhat different after you have worked in a place for a while. The dynamics of a place can be very different on the outside than they are on the inside. NEED TO ADD MORE HERE On the whole my probationary school is a very good place to work on and portrays an ethos of respect and supportiveness. During my time in the school I had two very good mentors who I could always go to when I needed help which was the case for *most* of the staff in the school. However, I found out very quickly who I could ask

advice from and who not to bother. My class had a lot of problems and was one

Continuing professional development (CPD) is now an obligatory and accepted part in the contracts of all teachers who teach in Scottish schools. 35 hours worth of professional development activities is required over the course of the year. Teachers decide on what goals they would like to achieve over the school year and tailor this around what courses they will attend. With the advent of the Curriculum for Excellence (CFE) the Government is proposing CPD opportunities to be more specific and clearly linked to the priorities of the CFE. The biggest study carried out on CPD in the early stages of teachers career was by Draper *et al.* , 1991, 1997, 1998 – “ The “ Scottish Study of Probationers: 1988-1991 and 1995 -1996”. The research followed a group of teachers as they completed their probationary year. The researchers hypothesised the CPD would be at the fore front of the probationers activities and believed they would regard it as a priority. However, what they did find was probationer teachers stated that they spend more time proving to others that they could do their job rather than trying to further develop their practice. From a personal experience this is something that I myself can relate to. From the minute you walk into a school as a probationer you (unconsciously in some cases) are being judged for competency. This idea also ties in with Fuller (1969) first stage of self concerns teacher are concerned with their own learning and the thoughts of others around them. Draper et al also found that the teachers who completed their probationary year on a supply based method was more likely to threaten their development as they were not in the same place for

any one time. Results showed that the second cohort 1995/96 was more satisfied with their professional development experiences than the first cohort 5 years previous to them. However, those teachers who completed their probationary year through short term contracts reported lower levels of satisfaction and perhaps have an impact on their practice in the future. As one of their participants in the study commented:

The effect of short-term contracts on initially keen and dedicated staff is disastrous. Morale, dedication and professionalism quickly evaporate’.

(Draper *et al.* , 1997, cited in GTCS 2006)

This is not surprising as the chances of those teachers being in a position to partake in many CPD sessions are rather low as what school nowadays would fund a place on a course for example for someone who a) isn't a permanent member of staff and b) probably won't be in the school long enough for the training to benefit the school. Without a doubt this will have an effect on a teacher's morale if little or no opportunities to develop present themselves. I myself find myself in a similar position a supply teacher the professional development opportunities are little or none.

(Draper et al cited in GTCS Research Jan 2006)

It may sound cliché but for as long as I can remember I have always wanted to be a Primary teacher. I applied for Primary Teaching in 6th year at school however I was not successful. Teaching for me at the time had been my only option and at the time I was devastated but soon realised that I could apply again. I then went on to complete a B/A honours degree in Psychology at the University of Psychology and then went on to the Post Graduate Primary course at the University of Paisley.

Looking at my strengths I believe teaching ICT seems to be one of them. ICT is something that I enjoy and is something that the children always respond well to. It comes very natural to me given the fact that I have grown up using computers. This is probably why the children enjoy it as they can see that is something I love doing and this in turn enthuses them. In my probationary school I led an in service on Activ Primary for my colleagues who were either new to the IWB (Interactive whiteboard) or were still puzzled after attending the course on Activ Primary. By doing this I felt good as it felt like I was giving back to the school by supporting colleagues rather than being supported all the time. Even now as a Supply Teacher I carry my pen drive around with me which has along with many other things ICT activities. Teachers in different schools often ask me where I get my resources most of which are from the internet. A recent example is an interactive advent calendar Power Point which I use with the children in the lead up to Christmas. Although I do feel that ICT is a strength of mine like everything else I am constantly learning new ideas and will continue to learn.

Looking at the SWOT analysis I have some experience using Active Learning in the upper school I would like to gain experience in using active learning in the early years. As a whole one of my goals is to try to keep abreast of current developments in early years education especially in light of the CFE. I recently was given the opportunity to attend an in-service in “ Story Grammar” one of the schools in which I do supply in. I found this to be very interesting and very beneficial in the early years. By attending this course this prompted me to look more closely into the curriculum where Story Grammar came from “ Key to Learning Curriculum” and I purchased the

Curriculum book by Galina Doyla. I have tried to use some of the ideas from the book in my work in the Nursery. Obviously just now I only volunteer in the Nursery my first and foremost goal for the future would be to gain a permanent job in early years.

REFERENCE LIST

Asprey, E., Hamilton. C & Haywood. S (2002). *PGCE Professional Workbook – Professional Issues in Primary Practice* . Exeter: Learning Matters

BBC News. (2009). *Demoted SNP education secretary endorses successor.*

Available: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/8388141.stm>).

Last accessed 4th December 2009.

EIS. (2009). *Collapse of jobs for new teachers is damaging pupils' education prospects says EIS* . News release

Available: <http://www.eis.org.uk/public.asp?id=431&dbase=3>.

Last accessed 15th December 2009.

GTC SCOTLAND RESEARCH. (1996). *Developing Teachers : A review of Early Professional Learning* .

Available: <http://www.gtcs.org>.

[uk/Research_/publishedresearch_/CPDresearch/research_cpd.aspx](http://www.gtcs.org.uk/Research_/publishedresearch_/CPDresearch/research_cpd.aspx).

Last accessed 20/12/09.

Macleod, A. (2009). *Fiona Hyslop stripped of education role in SNP Cabinet.*

Available: [http://www.timesonline.co.](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/scotland/article6939026)

[uk/tol/news/uk/scotland/article6939026](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/scotland/article6939026). ece.

Last accessed 10th December 2009.

Pigge, F. L. and Marso, R. N. (1997) ' A seven year longitudinal multi-factor assessment of teaching concerns development preparation and early years of teaching', *Teaching and Teacher Education*

13(2): 225-235.

Pollard, A, Collins, J, Maddock, M, Simco, N, Swaffield, S, Warin, J & Warwick P (2005) *Reflective Teaching* (2nd edition) London: Continuum

Schein (2004). *Organizational culture and leadership* . (3rd edition)

San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

SNP. (2007). *SNP 2007 Manifesto*. Available:

<http://www.snp.org/node/13534>.

Last accessed 11th December 2009.

Swanson. I. (2009). *Fiona Hyslop sacked.*

Available: <http://edinburghnews.scotsman.com/politics/Fiona-Hyslop-sacked-as-Education.5871555.jp>.

Last accessed 4th December 2009.

<https://assignbuster.com/reflection-on-becoming-a-teacher/>

Watzke, J. L. (2007). Longitudinal research on beginning teacher development: Complexity as a challenge to concerns-based stage theory. *Teaching and Teacher Education* . 23 (1), 106-122.