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This article draws upon selective results of a four year, DfES funded, independent research project into variations in the work, lives and effectiveness of 300 teachers in a range of 100 primary and secondary schools in 7 LAs. All were broadly representative of the national age, experience and gender profile of teachers and of the SES/attainment profile of schools. The project found that:

- (i) there are associations between the conditions and management of work, lives and teachers' effectiveness.
- (ii) teachers do not necessarily become more effective in later phases of their professional lives. They do not automatically progress in an even, incremental way from being a novice through to becoming an expert.
- (iii) There are important associations between teachers' commitment, resilience and a positive sense of professional identity, job satisfaction and effectiveness.

What, then, do school leaders need to know about creating the optimum conditions for effectiveness and improvement in their schools? What needs and concerns do CPD need to take into account? Just as the best teaching 'personalises' students' learning agendas, so the best CPD will personalise the development agendas of teachers.

Professional Life Phases: characteristics and trajectories

Teacher commitment and resilience are key factors in their effectiveness. These are mediated by the ways they were able to manage and be supported in managing different 'scenarios' in which they live and work and by their needs and concerns. It follows that school leaders i) need to be aware of these 'scenarios' and 'phases' if they are to plan for CPD which is relevant and effective; that ii) CPD will need to represent a range of learning and development opportunities; and iii) that CPD interventions must 'target' both instrumental needs and those designed to support teachers' commitment and resilience. We found that teachers' work and lives spanned six professional life phases.

1. Professional life phase 0-3 years – Commitment: Support and Challenge

Sub-groups: a) Developing sense of efficacy; or
b) Reduced sense of efficacy

Commitment: support and challenge

The outstanding characteristic of the large majority of teachers (85%) was their high level of commitment to teaching. Two sub-groups were observed within this professional life phase: one with a developing sense of efficacy and the other with a reducing sense of efficacy.

Teachers who had an ‘easy beginning’ benefited from a combination of influences that were more positive than those for teachers with a ‘painful beginning’. Teachers in both groups reported the negative impact of poor pupil behaviour on their work.

For new teachers who were struggling to survive the challenges of a new professional life in the reality of the classroom, the impact of combined support from the school/departmental leadership and colleagues can be highly significant in helping to build their confidence and self-efficacy and deciding the direction of their next professional life path.

CPD activities in relation to Classroom Knowledge were most frequently reported as having a positive impact on their morale and as being significant to the stabilisation of their teaching practice. These activities included school/department-based training and INSET days, external (NQT) conferences, and visiting and working with teachers in other schools.

The key influences on these teachers’ potential professional life trajectories were found to be the level of support, recognition of their work and the school culture.

2. Professional life phase 4-7 years – Identity and Efficacy in Classroom

Sub-groups: a) Sustaining a strong sense of identity, self-efficacy and effectiveness;
b) Coping/managing identity, efficacy and effectiveness; or
c) Vulnerable and declining: identity, efficacy and effectiveness at risk

An important feature of teachers in this phase in the VITAE research was that promotion and additional responsibilities had already begun to play a significant role in teachers’ perceived identities, motivation and sense of effectiveness. Most teachers (78%) in this cohort had additional responsibilities and particularly stressed the importance of promotion to their

growing professional identity. This suggests that for many teachers this professional life phase is not a stabilisation period. Rather, it is a period in which teachers, whilst consolidating their professional identities in their classrooms, also have challenges beyond these.

An important difference between sub-groups *a* and *b* was that the latter group had a stronger concern over their ability to manage their heavy workloads. Teachers in sub-group *c*) felt that their identity, efficacy and effectiveness were at risk because of workload and difficult life events.

Support from the school/departmental leadership, colleagues and pupils continued to be of importance to teachers in this phase who demonstrated a primary concern about their confidence and feelings in being effective. In contrast with professional life phase 0-3, there were more frequent references made to heavy workload which was seen as reducing their teaching effectiveness. The need for classroom knowledge and knowledge of external policies was markedly less, role effectiveness similar, and CPD which focussed upon professional and personal development needs had become more important.

3. Professional life phase 8-15 years – Managing Changes in Role and Identity: Tensions and Transitions

Sub-groups: a) Sustained engagement; or
b) Detachment/ loss of motivation

This professional life phase marks a key watershed in teachers' professional development. Teachers are beginning to face additional tensions in managing change in both their professional and personal lives. The majority of teachers in VITAE were struggling with work-life tensions. Most of these teachers had additional (79%) and had to place more focus upon their management role. Heavy workloads worked against the effectiveness of their classroom teaching.

Sub-group *a*) contained teachers with sustained engagement whose expected trajectories were career advancement with increased self-efficacy and commitment. The combined support from leadership, staff collegiality, rapport with the pupils and CPD was a contributing factor in this sub-group's positive sense of effectiveness.

Around half of the teachers in sub group *b*) reported a lack of support from leadership (50%) and colleagues (60%). Adverse personal events and tensions between work and life were also important issues. Other key characteristics of this sub-group include: giving up management roles because of adverse personal events (e.g. ill health, increased family

commitments); decreased motivation and commitment had led to early retirement (e.g. one late entrant and one 'career-break' teacher); and, disillusionment/ low self-efficacy/decreased motivation and commitment.

4. Professional life phase 16-23 years – Work-life Tensions: Challenges to Motivation and Commitment

In common with the previous two professional life phases (4-7 and 8-15), excessive paperwork and heavy workload were seen as key hindrances to their effectiveness. In contrast with teachers from the earlier professional life phases, events in personal lives, coupled with additional duties, had a stronger impact on the work of this cohort, and as a consequence, a larger proportion of teachers were struggling with a negative work-life balance. Teachers in this phase were categorised into three sub-groups on the basis of their management of the challenges of work life and home events:

- i) Sub-group a). Teachers who had seen their motivation and commitment increase as a result of their further career advancement and good pupil results/relationships and who were most likely to see their motivation and commitment continue to grow (Primary=63%; Secondary=32%);
- ii) Sub-group b). Teachers who maintained their motivation, commitment and sense of effectiveness as a consequence of their agency and determination to improve time management and who were most likely to cope with work-life tensions in their next professional life phase (Primary=30%; Secondary=37%);
- iii) Sub-group c). Teachers whose workload, management of competing tensions and career stagnation had led to decreased motivation, commitment and perceived effectiveness and whose career trajectories were expected to be coupled with declining motivation and commitment (Primary=4%; Secondary=27%).

In addition to work-life tensions, the combined negative effects of pupil behaviour, personal events, policy, leadership and CPD had strongly contributed to sub-group c teachers' decreased motivation and career stagnation.

5. Professional life phase 24-30 years – Challenges to Sustaining Motivation

Teachers in this cohort were facing more intensive challenges to sustaining their motivation in the profession. Eighty eight per cent had additional leadership responsibilities. Deteriorating pupil behaviour, the impact of personal life events, resentment at 'being forced to jump

through hoops by a constant stream of new initiatives', taking stock of their careers (and lives) and length of service in the school were key influences on the effectiveness of teachers in this cohort.

On the basis of their levels of motivation, two sub-groups were identified.

- i) Sub-group a). Teachers who had sustained a strong sense of motivation and commitment (19 Primary=59%; Secondary=45%) and who were most likely to continue to enjoy an increase in their self-efficacy, motivation and commitment;
- ii) Sub-group b). Teachers holding on but losing motivation which was most likely to lead to a sense of detachment and early retirement (Primary=41%; Secondary=55%).

Role Effectiveness activities continued to be important. Classroom knowledge updates were important to teachers in this phase; and more general professional/personal development needs were of great importance.

6. Professional life phase 31+ – Sustaining/Declining Motivation, Ability to Cope with Change, Looking to Retire

Pupils' progress and positive teacher-pupil relationships were the main source of job satisfaction for these teachers. This cohort were categorised into two sub-groups.

- i) *Sub-group a). Teachers whose motivation and commitment remained high despite or because of changing personal, professional and organisation contexts and whose expected trajectories were strong agency, efficacy and achievement (Primary=64%; Secondary=64%);*
- ii) *Sub-group b). Teachers whose motivation was declining or had declined and whose expected trajectories were increased fatigue, disillusionment and exit (Primary=37%; Secondary=37%).*

Not only were supportive school cultures of crucial importance to teachers' sense of effectiveness across all six professional life phases but for teachers in this professional life phase, in-school support played a major part in teachers' *continued engagement* in the profession.

Messages for School Leaders

The understanding of teachers' professional life progression requires a consideration of factors not only within the organisational settings but also how these factors interact with and are managed by organisations and teachers in conjunction with factors arising from their personal lives. Teachers' professional life phases are dynamic in nature. The interaction between a range of influential factors in their work and personal contexts is a sophisticated and continuous process, impacts differentially on teachers' perceived effectiveness within the same and across different phases of their professional lives, and needs to be managed.

There are nine important messages for school leaders:

- i) In terms of CPD, most teachers' had experienced a limited range of largely externally provided short courses related either to subject knowledge enhancement, the implementation of externally generated innovation or matters related to their roles in the organisation.
- ii) There were generational differences in teachers' professional experience and views of educational change. Poor pupil behaviour had a negative impact on both early and late years teachers. Resistance to mandated reforms was found in most late years teachers and regarded, to a larger or lesser extent, as a denial of teachers' values, status and experience which they had treasured and enjoyed throughout their professional lives.
- iii) An important message from teachers in all six professional life phases, particularly those in small primary schools, was their desire to share practice and expertise with their colleagues and teachers in other schools.
- iv) CPD alone is unlikely to exert a major impact on teacher effectiveness. It needs to take place within professional, situated and personal contexts which support rather than erode teachers' sense of positive identity and which contribute, in each professional life phase, to their well being, job satisfaction, sense of achievement and capacities to maintain upward trajectories of commitment.
- v) There were clear differences in the experiences of primary and secondary teachers and between those in schools in different socio-economic contexts. Whilst almost all teachers referred to deteriorating pupil behaviour and the impact of central government initiatives on workload and class composition, it was those in schools in areas of social and economic deprivation who referred to these more frequently and to associated problems of demoralisation, failing energy and ill health.

- vi) Sustaining resilience needs to be a key purpose of CPD.
- vii) Teachers in these schools – particularly secondary teachers – seem to face not one or two but a combination of challenges each day of their working lives. It is the extent to which the combination is able to be ameliorated by other intrinsic and extrinsic support that determines whether teachers are able to survive and – even within difficult circumstances – flourish. The quality of leadership is a key mediating influence.
- viii) Increased workload, and role diversification for teachers, means longer times spent in working outside the school for the purposes of planning and assessing. It means, also, that increased intellectual and emotional energy is likely to be needed in order to implement new curricula in new ways.
- ix) Leadership, by headteachers and other colleagues, is a key mediating factor in building and supporting teachers' capacities for effectiveness. It has important positive or significant negative effects upon teachers' motivation and commitment trajectories in each phase of their professional lives because, as this research shows, teachers do not necessarily become more effective with age and experience, and because the scenarios which they experience vary in kind and complexity during their working lives.