

# An Investigation into Teacher Wellbeing During the Teacher Training Year

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## Abstract

For those studying for the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), the teaching practice placement can be a daunting experience. Trainee teachers have to adjust into a new workplace and a complicated professional role which can be stressful; this can result in teachers leaving the profession in their early years if they do not equip themselves with coping strategies and display resilient behaviour.

The aims of this study were to gain a deeper understanding of how a cohort of science and design and technology PGCE students settled into schools on their teaching placement and to investigate any differences between mature trainees (those who had taken at least one gap year after their undergraduate degree) and those who have continued straight through their education. Two questionnaires (pre  $n=42$ ; post  $n=48$ ) and a voluntary interview ( $n=7$ ) were used. Many trainees described their experience as rewarding, yet exhausting and challenging. However, the interviews highlighted there was some erosion of their personal 'self' at this early stage of their career. This resulted in, for example, changes in their sleep, eating and exercise patterns and an impact on their relationships.

## Key words

well-being, teacher training, school environments, mentoring

## Introduction

In England, most new teachers train for the profession by undertaking a one-year Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course. Many of these courses are providing credits towards obtaining a Masters level (M-level) degree. The research undertaken provides insights into the PGCE year in England (experienced by design and technology and science trainee teachers) although the findings, we would hope, would be relevant to a wider audience in similar contexts.

The teaching practice placement requires trainees to understand the multiple roles expected of them: delivering subject knowledge, preparing schemes of work, pastoral duties through the role of a form tutor and being a part

of the school staff team. The Developing Professional Thinking for Technology Teachers: An International Study (DEPTH) project described trainee responses to a three element component model which relates to key areas for any teacher: subject knowledge, pedagogic knowledge and school knowledge (Banks et al., 2000). At the centre of these areas lies the personal constructs of the teacher;

...a complex amalgam of their (the trainee teacher) past experiences of learning, a personal view of what constitutes 'good' teaching and a personal belief in the purposes of the subject...A student teacher has to question his or her personal beliefs about their subject, why they want to teach it as they do, as they work out a rationale for their classroom behaviours (Banks et al., 2004, p. 144).

Others (for example, Furlong, 1997; Tang, 2002) highlight that trainee teachers need to learn how to 'frame' their teaching scenarios. This framing process required by trainee teachers should construct their teaching self during the PGCE year and in order to do this they will need to reflect on the knowledge gained from their experiences with pupils (Eraut, 1994), the interactions with other practitioners and their peers at the school through their social contact and conclude to themselves what it means to be a teacher (Samaras and Gismondi, 1998). Another area that trainees have to bridge during the PGCE year is linking the pedagogical and theoretical knowledge with the practical teaching experience (Lyle, 1996).

Trainee teachers' professional learning coupled with the intensity of a school day can be demanding for trainee teachers, if they are faced with a range of potentially challenging interactions with pupils, parents and staff colleagues. Furthermore, it is an emotionally demanding job when everyday pressures turn into pressures that affect a teacher's vulnerability (Day et al., 2007).

Having a positive sense of well-being can enable teachers to manage the pressures associated with the profession and a degree of self-efficacy to believe that you can succeed in the situation is important (Day et al., 2007). Teachers work alongside other colleagues and constantly interact with pupils therefore there is a need for them to

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be emotionally literate (Steiner and Perry, 1997). This will also impact on trainee teachers who are not aware of the conflicts and politics within each school placement establishment, and this may exacerbate their worries and personal confidence, during or following the PGCE course. Therefore the underlying reason for this research project was to understand further the needs of trainee teachers in two different subjects whilst on school placement.

## Literature related to the Trainee Teacher experience

Conversing with teachers immediately reveals that their feelings and passion for children form part of their teacher character (Kelchtermans, 1996) and emotional responses are closely linked to the regard with which they hold of themselves and for others around them (Nias, 1996). It is, therefore, important to consider the emotional needs of teachers' early years in their career as "emotions play a crucial role in communication and engagement between people." (Demetriou, Wilson & Winterbottom, 2009, p. 449) Teachers are vulnerable; interaction is at the core of the teaching profession, whether it is with pupils, staff or parents and many comments can be damaging and taken personally by a novice or trainee teacher.

To enable a teacher to persevere in the profession and cope with the everyday demands, they require the ability to control and acknowledge their own personality and emotions. This includes responding and dealing with accountability and pressure (Hancock and Scherff, 2010). Keeping teachers interested and enthusiastic amidst these demands can be challenging for school managers. Hence, their physical and psychological well-being integrated alongside their basic 'needs' must be satisfied (physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, cognitive, aesthetic and self-actualization) (Maslow, 1970).

For pupils' needs to be met in the classroom (such as building self-esteem, strong motivation to achieve), the teacher must be feeling secure themselves. Day et al. (2007) report that to maintain teacher effectiveness,

Creating positive work conditions, meeting teachers' professional and personal needs and minimizing teacher burnout, is the key to encouraging teachers' resilience, promoting teacher well-being and positive professional life trajectories, improving the conditions for teachers'

effectiveness in relation to pupils' performance, and ultimately, school improvement. (p. 214)

Trainee teachers' enthusiasm and naivety can be summed up by Galton & MacBeath (2008) who reported that, Teachers entering the profession today may expect classrooms to be like the ones they attended but although a teaching space may look surprisingly similar on the surface, the quality and dynamics of what happens there are not what they used to be. (p. 5)

The school placement needs to be an environment that provides a close relationship for the trainee teacher to develop between their personal self and their professional attributes (Furlong and Maynard, 1995). Research by Maynard (2000) reported that trainee teachers discussed good mentoring in their placement schools when they felt accepted, welcome, included, supported and recognised as an individual teacher. Hobson (2002) reported that having supportive mentors who were able to give time to them, sharing practical ideas and offering constructive feedback was valued by trainee teachers. Further suggestions of a good mentor were reported by Foster (1999): they provided an induction to the school, liaised with colleagues in the department and supported extra-curricular opportunities. However, if there were break downs in the trainee/mentor relationship then the impact on the trainee was significant and some trainees in the research commented on crying, losing self-confidence and self-esteem (Maynard, 2000). Ineffective mentoring was reported to be overly critical, expectation being too high for the trainee teacher to meet, not being listened to or failing to treat the trainee as a professional (Foster, 1999). This concurs with other research relating to reasons why trainees leave the PGCE course due to a lack of support or due to the stressful experience (Chambers and Roper, 2000; Tickle, 1991).

In order to prevent some teachers becoming disillusioned in their early years of teaching, it is necessary to learn more about the training in school from the trainees' perspective.

## The Study

The study was undertaken with a cohort of secondary trainee teachers training to teach either science or design

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and technology. The data collected represent different phases of the PGCE course and consideration was placed on the different experiences for those trainees who had continued onto the PGCE from their undergraduate course and those who were mature trainees. Both subjects studied require a broad area of subject knowledge and development of some areas during the course. The PGCE course is 36 weeks (longer than undergraduate programmes) and therefore additional tasks such as part-time employment or childcare /carer responsibilities may impact on the trainee during the course. The Loughborough University PGCE course comprises two 11 weeks of teaching practice placements in two contrasting schools. The study used both qualitative and quantitative approaches through questionnaires and interviews. This mixed methods approach suggests using appropriate and available methods to answer the research questions as necessary (Thomas, 2009). To gauge a greater knowledge of teaching placement experiences, collectively asking a large group, anonymously through questionnaires, where opinions and real-life can be shared, was deemed as the appropriate method. Linking this approach with data from individual interviews provided more robust research outcomes that could be validated through triangulation of the empirical data with relevant published research findings (Denscombe, 2010).

There are many variables in this research: the placement school, the mentor, whether the trainee is mature (no specific detail on employment or number of years since undergraduate degree was deemed necessary) or continuing straight on the PGCE from their undergraduate course and each trainee's prior experience. Consequently, the expectation was that the mixed methods approach would provide initial research insights that could provide the foundation for later targeted research activities.

## The research questions:

1. How do teaching placement experiences impact on trainees' emotional well-being?
2. How do trainees view themselves as being able to produce strategies for coping with their workload and solving problems encountered?

## End of First School Placement Questionnaire (Appendix 1)

The first voluntary questionnaire, 'Settling into Teaching

Practice Schools' was completed by 42 trainee teachers having successfully completed their first teaching placement (n=20 in science; n=22 design and technology). Prior to question 1, respondents were asked to indicate if their education had been continuous from school to PGCE. The reason for asking this was to determine any correlation, from responses to other questions, with settling into the school environment and continuity of education. The second questionnaire, completed after the second teaching placement, also starts with this question.

Question 1 was based on an inventory developed by Entwistle (1998) which is designed to probe students' reasons for entering a higher education course. The ASSIST inventory consists of a series of statements designed to test whether student reasons are based on either employment prospects, personal development, or delaying employment. The second question allowed the trainee teachers to consider whether they found things out for themselves, automatically looked for opportunities or needed help to carry out tasks/plans in school. The differences in behaviour may be contributory to retention during initial training and subsequent employment.

The final question allowed the trainee teachers to consider any problems or issues faced during the teaching practice and any strategies that they feel would have helped them. These questions provided information on specific problems encountered in school and for trainee development, allowed them to reflect on strategies to overcome them.

## Trainee Teacher Interviews

Towards the end of the second teaching placement, seven science trainees participated in a voluntary individual interview (six female; one male). This was an opportunistic sample; none of the design and technology trainees volunteered. The interviews were conducted in a phenomenological manner which states that the researcher identifies the 'essence of human experiences concerning a phenomenon, as described by the participants in a study.' (Cresswell, 2003, p. 15) Due to the inhibitions associated with audio recording, no recordings were made throughout the interviews; only notes were taken. The questions were based on the school experience and six questions were asked: What

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has been your experience of the settling in process at your school? What aspects of your work with students in the classroom has been particularly challenging/rewarding? How has working in the school impacted upon you personally? How closely does your actual experience of working in a school match your expectations? What advice would you give to next year's cohort of trainee teachers bearing in mind your experiences this year on teaching practice? Is there anything I have not asked you which you would like to comment upon regarding your teaching practice experience?

## End of Second School Placement Questionnaire (Appendix 2)

The second voluntary questionnaire, 'Settling into Teaching Practice – End of Phase 2' was completed by the trainee teachers (n= 48; design and technology n=19 and science n=29) at the end of the second teaching placement to triangulate the findings of the interviews. This questionnaire was designed to be simple

to complete, but to provide information relating to how the teaching placement impacted on their lives and the high and low points of the school experience. The first question focused on how the trainees found the move from the first to the second teaching practice placement: 'easy' (implying no concerns regarding the change of environment); 'generally ok' (perhaps some positive and negative feelings associated with the change of school); 'difficult' (the change was difficult in terms of settling in and responding to the workload). This should provide more understanding about the trainees' self-efficacy and vulnerability. Trainees also considered their most enjoyable and lowest points during the teaching practice, words they would use to describe their teaching practice (positive phrases: rewarding, exciting/fun, enjoyed it, boosted confidence and negative phrases: challenging, stressful, exhausting and decreased confidence). This was aimed at learning more about the work stressors. Finally, using their ability to be self-evaluating and a reflective practitioner, suggest advice for next year's cohort.

**Table 1: Results of why the trainees had chosen teacher training**

	Science			Design and Technology		
	Overall Number	Mature No. (n=13)	Cont Ed No. (n=7)	Overall Number	Mature No. (n=12)	Cont Ed No. (n=10)
Question 1 (trainees could tick as many responses as they deemed appropriate)						
a. the qualification at the end of the course would enable me to get a good job when I finish.	17	11	6	21	12	9
b. the course will help me to develop knowledge and skills that will be useful later on.	16	10	6	21	12	9
c. I wanted a challenge to develop as a person, broaden my horizons and face new challenges.	16	11	5	21	11	10
d. The opportunities for an active social life attracted me.	2	2	0	2	0	2
e. I would be able to study a subject in depth, and take an interesting and stimulating course.	8	5	3	11	7	4
f. I basically wanted to try and prove to myself that I can become a teacher.	6	4	2	4	2	2
g. Having done well at school, it seemed to be the natural thing to go on to do.	2	2	0	1	0	1
h. Allow for stability in a profession that can be practiced in any culture.	1	1	0	0	0	0

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## Analysis of Results

The questionnaires were analysed and tabulated demonstrating the number of trainee teachers in each subject who responded in a particular way towards an aspect of their school experience. Reference was made to the number of trainees who had continued straight through onto the PGCE course from their undergraduate course to compare if there is a difference between those who are mature trainee teachers (end of the first teaching placement, seven out of the twenty science trainees and ten out of twenty two design and technology trainees had continued onto the PGCE course from their undergraduate course. Three (of the seven) interview participants and in the second questionnaire, eleven out of nineteen design and technology trainees and eleven out of twenty seven science trainees had continued straight through onto the course from their undergraduate studies). For questions which required a written and reflective account of the experience, answers reported were categorised under

topical headings which were apparent through comparing the data which emerged (Thomas, 2009).

### Table 1: Why trainees chose teacher training

Of the whole cohort of trainee teachers, the most popular reason for choosing the PGCE course was to gain a qualification at the end of the course which would enable them to get a good job. The other main reasons were: the course will help to develop knowledge and skills and wanting new challenges to develop as a person

### Tables 2 and 3: Trainees' perceptions of how they work independently

The results showed that 18/20 of the science trainee teachers and 17/22 design and technology trainee teachers always or often found out for themselves before being told what to do showing independence within the school. Over 39/42 of both science and design and

**Table 2: Trainees' perceptions of how they work independently (science)**

Question 2	Science – Cont Ed (n=7)				Science – Mature (n=13)				Science – All (n=20)			
	Always	Often	Rarely	Never	Always	Often	Rarely	Never	Always	Often	Rarely	Never
a. I find out for myself what to do before being told.	1	5	1	0	2	10	1	0	3	15	2	0
b. I automatically look for opportunities.	2	4	1	0	5	8	0	0	7	12	1	0
c. I need help to carry out plans and tasks.	0	0	6	1	0	6	6	1	0	6	12	2

**Table 3: Trainees' perceptions of how they work independently (design and technology)**

Question 2	Design and Technology – Cont Ed (n=10)			Design and Technology – Mature (n=12)			Design and Technology – All (n=22)		
	Always	Often	Rarely	Always	Often	Rarely	Always	Often	Rarely
a. I find out for myself what to do before being told.	1	6	3	1	9	2	2	15	5
b. I automatically look for opportunities.	2	8	0	4	6	2	6	14	2
c. I need help to carry out plans and tasks.	0	0	10	1	7	4	1	7	14

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technology trainees are always/often able to automatically look for opportunities. However, 6/20 (science) and 8/22 (design and technology) often needed help to carry out their plans and tasks (see tables 2 and 3).

Many issues were highlighted relating to problems on their first teaching placement. The results were categorised and a percentage calculated of the responses provided. In design and technology 30% of the trainees referred to feeling young and finding it hard to settle into school. In science, only 43% of trainees responded to this question and 29% of comments related to issues surrounding staff. Suggestions by the trainees to overcome these problems ranged from more team teaching and planning with class teachers, introducing trainees as staff to pupils not as students, providing trainees with necessary keys/handbooks required by the school, provide trainees with their own work space and better introduction to other staff members.

## *Interview Results*

The interview results were categorised into five themes: Personal Self; Mentor; Pupils; Transition from first to second teaching practice; School environment. The number of participants who reported the finding is recorded in brackets.

### *Personal Self*

- Loss of sleep/disturbed sleep (7/7)
- Forced early nights/going to bed early (7/7)
- Difficulty switching off (7/7)
- An awareness of being kept going by effects of adrenaline ('flight, fight, fright') (7/7)
- Awareness of impact on immune system e.g. generally feeling run-down (7/7)
- Reduction in social life/relational contact time/time with family (7/7)
- Changes in eating patterns – weight loss/gain, eating less healthily (7/7)
- Little or no time for exercise (7/7)
- Variations in confidence levels day by day (7/7)
- Feelings of loneliness (5/7)
- Minimal relaxation (7/7)
- Difficulties in work-life balance (7/7)
- Discomfort at being monitored by staff/parents/university tutors (7/7)
- Having to make a huge personal investment linked with

- physical, mental and emotional exhaustion (7/7)

### *Mentor*

Trainee teachers had positive experiences when treated with empathy and respect by their Mentor (7/7).

Positive experiences were also linked to those involved with trainee teachers having appropriate time to support them and were actively engaged in the process (7/7).

### *Pupils*

Rewarding aspects were when lessons went well and when individual pupils made progress or improved their behaviour (7/7).

The challenging aspects of teaching were pupil apathy, low level disruption by pupils, constant noise/chatter in lessons and verbal abuse (5/7).

Trainee teachers were surprised by the poor levels of understanding and attainment of many pupils (4/7)

Transition from first to second teaching placement was felt to be difficult with a lack of progress initially; the trainees would have found useful more preparation on this (7/7).

### *School environment*

Trainee teachers had positive experiences when treated with empathy and respected within the whole school (7/7).

Some trainee teachers enjoyed lessons in which they were able to teach creatively using their own ideas (3/7).

Most trainee teachers described their experience as being close to their expectations and that they were surprised at how much they enjoyed classroom teaching (6/7).

## **Questionnaire Results at the end of Second Teaching Placement (Phase 2)**

### **Table 4: How trainees found the transition from first to second school placement.**

The transition from the first teaching placement to the second was highlighted as more difficult than expected for 9/29 of the science trainee teachers and 3/19 of design and technology trainee teachers. The science trainees found settling into their second teaching placement generally ok (16/29) compared with 8/19 design and technology trainees. Of the science trainees, 4/29 found this transition easy. However, in design and technology, 7/19 found the transition to their second placement easy.

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**Table 4: How trainees found the transition from the first to second teaching placement.**

Question 1	Design and Technology (n=19)			Science (n=29)		
	Cont Ed (n=11)	Mature (n=8)	All	Cont Ed (n=11)	Mature (n=18)	All
Easy Transition	5	2	7	1	3	4
Generally OK transition	5	3	8	4	12	16
Difficult transition	1	2	3	6	3	9

**Table 5: How trainees described the second teaching placement**

Question 5 (trainees could tick as many responses as deemed appropriate)	Design (n=19)			Science (n=29)		
	Cont Ed (n=11)	Mature (n=8)	All	Cont Ed (n=11)	Mature (n=18)	All
Really enjoyed it	7	6	13	8	10	18
Exhausting	6	7	13	6	9	15
Stressful	4	3	7	3	6	9
Rewarding	6	7	13	8	6	14
Challenging	6	7	13	10	13	23
Decreased confidence	2	1	3	0	3	3
Exciting/Fun	2	4	6	7	4	11
Boosted confidence	4	7	11	9	8	17

There are opposite trends relating to those trainees whose education was continuous from their undergraduate courses – in design and technology these trainees had the lowest response of finding the settling in process more difficult whereas in science, they had the most responses of finding it more difficult.

**Table 5: Trainees’ descriptions of their second placement.**

Trainees’ descriptions of the practice showed that the experience was overall positive, with the categories: really enjoyed it, rewarding, fun/exciting, boosted my confidence, being 57% of the responses. The lowest percentages were related to the teaching practice being stressful and decreasing their confidence. Over half of the trainee teachers (58%) found the teaching placement exhausting.

The interview comments relating to work/life balance agree with the second questionnaire responses. 15/29 of science trainees and 13/19 design and technology trainees who found the second teaching practice exhausting and 23/29 science and 13/19 design and technology who found it challenging (see table 5). Trainees reporting on the highs and lows of the teaching placement, stated that poor behaviour of pupils in lessons was acknowledged as being a low point during their teaching practice for 31% of science trainees and 11% design and technology trainees; 52% science and 58% design and technology trainees reflected on rewarding and positive moments relating to pupils achieving, especially if they had been ill-behaved or special educational needs pupils.

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At the end of the course, there were some similarities and differences between the enjoyable moments during the teaching practice for mature trainees and those trainee teachers who continued onto the course following their undergraduate studies. In design and technology and science, the results showed that the following common enjoyable moments on their teaching practice were related to pupil rapport, teaching and extra-curricular involvement. In comparison, the mature trainee teachers' responses to the most enjoyable moments were related to getting to know their pupils and developing their teaching skills. The lowest points of the second teaching practice related to workload, pupil discipline and lack of support from the school Mentor or department. Despite age and experience differences, satisfying and difficult moments were quite similar for the trainee teachers for both subjects. Their descriptions of the teaching placement, however, reflected some differences.

For the science comparisons, those trainee teachers who had continued straight through in their education showed higher percentages in the positive descriptions: really enjoyed it, rewarding, fun/exciting and boosted their confidence. However, a higher percentage also stated that they found the teaching placement more challenging. In design and technology, the percentage for one trainee teacher who had been in other employment prior to the course was higher than those trainee teachers who had continued straight through their education and this was in decreasing their confidence. The mature trainee teachers in this cohort were markedly more positive, especially in the teaching practice being enjoyable, rewarding, fun/exciting and boosting their confidence.

From the interviews and the second questionnaire, helpful suggestions were made for next year's cohort of trainee teachers: keeping in touch with other trainees, filing as they go along; be organised; get involved with extra-curricular activities; take advice on board and act on it; get advice from Mentors and laboratory technicians; lesson planning gets easier the more you do it; observe Advanced Skills Teachers.

## Discussion

Trainee teachers require specific support in their teaching practice schools as there are many challenges involved (Stanulis and Floden, 2009). There are many differences

within each school context and the environment, such as whether there is a religious affiliation, academies, independent/state and differences within subjects such as subject knowledge specialism and personal development, department and school Mentor. Also, there may be variation between the Mentor approaches and their working relationship with the trainee teacher. The DEPTH project reported that school knowledge is an issue for some trainee teachers, for example fitting into the school and department, cultural and social differences between the two teaching placement schools and differences in school policies (Banks et al., 2000). This project also highlighted the difficulties in some relationships between trainee teachers and their Mentor and the different levels of support offered to them.

Mature trainee teachers in both subjects were independent however appeared to lack confidence (and require reassurance) in their new workplace when carrying out lesson plans or associated tasks. There was no mention on the questionnaires or in the interviews surrounding additional burdens such as childcare or part-time jobs affecting their school placement; this area was only suggested in terms of work-life balance. There were no significant differences between mature trainees and those who had continued straight through their education with regard to their transition to their second teaching placement. For science the mature trainees found the placement more exhausting and challenging than those who continued straight through their education. This is not as apparent in design and technology.

Findings from the interviews show that some trainee teachers encounter problems dealing with the behaviour management and general disruption caused by pupils in the classroom. The second questionnaire also highlighted that a low point for trainee teachers was the pupil discipline. These trainee teachers may not have encountered or experienced poorly behaved pupils. Equipping trainee teachers to confidently manage these experiences during their teaching practice placements is paramount to their success and this is in agreement with research by Morton et al. (1997) who found that the teaching placement increased slightly anxiety in trainee teachers regarding classroom management.

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Professional relationships within the school are imperative for trainee teachers to settle in and to make progress. Maynard's (2000) research echoes this finding also; trainees value their placements if they feel welcome, accepted and included. Relationships between trainee teachers and the head teacher, pupil parents and their staff colleagues can be a source of their vulnerability (Kelchtermans, 1996). However, a supportive yet 'critical friend' Mentor can advise and encourage a trainee not only in their teaching as a reflective practitioner, but in familiarising them in the life and running of the school. A positive trainee-Mentor relationship enabled progress and enjoyment of the school placement. This concurs with Foster's (1999) research mentioned earlier. These relationships will depend on the humanized culture of the school; there will be differences for staff and trainee teachers.

The rewarding aspects of the profession and genuine satisfaction, reported on the second questionnaire, was encouraging and since trainee teachers commit themselves into their job, along with personal investment of time and energy inside and outside of the school day, focussing on their rewards and positive experiences needs to be something that trainee teachers are advised to reflect and evaluate upon. If teachers feel they have established a good rapport with the school system, are treated similarly to other staff and form empathic relationships with their pupils, this can make the whole school experience more significant and positive (Wilson et al., 2010). This concurs with research by Nias (1996) who considers that, "When teachers feel they are effective, assisting the learning of all pupils, keeping pace with their needs, handling the complex demands of teaching with insight and fluid flexibility, they experience joy, excitement, exhilaration and deep satisfaction." (Nias, 1996, p. 297) This suggests that trainee teachers need to be aware and

confident of their, and others', emotional literacy which may be an area not covered in their own education.

Another implication for teacher training could be greater emphasis on training teachers on how to cope with pressures and stress during the course. This may help future teachers balance the work stressors and their well-being and should impact on effective teaching. Research by Burns (1992) (cited in Hall, Hall & Sirin, 1996)

reported that student teachers who had participated in less than 15hrs of personal growth work (including self-reflection, Rogers' core conditions (1961; 1969) use of body language, allowing silence in situations), on their teaching placement, performed significantly better. Research by Hall et al. (1996) showed that a 30hr counselling module for experienced teachers on a human relations course resulted in an impact on their behaviour one year after the module. Changes in behaviour were: considering their use of body language to meet the situation, more use of non-verbal than verbal language and reflection on situations. These findings, based on the humanized school environment and whole-person relationships, suggest that some therapeutic training surrounding looking after yourself, for example work-life balance, and coping with the interpersonal relationships encountered in schools will be beneficial to teachers once they are fully trained and 'on the job'. This could be an aid to survival during teaching careers and be a step forward in teacher retention.

Expectations of teachers are high. Therefore, the support to enable trainee teachers (and all other teachers) to meet these expectations must be available and foreseen as a crucial agenda in any school.

## Conclusions

Within this small sample study, with too many variables relating to school placements, there are some useful indicators for teacher educators rather than robust conclusions.

In this study, the main conclusion to be found is that although teaching placements can be stressful and challenging that over half of the science and design and technology trainees really enjoyed them. This concurs

with the participants in the interview who all stated that they enjoyed their teaching placements. In science, the trainees really enjoyed the placement and it boosted their confidence in their ability to teach. However, a smaller number (9/29) found it stressful and 15/29 found it exhausting. In design and technology, similarly the trainees found the teaching placement enjoyable and rewarding however 7/19 found it stressful and 13/19 found it exhausting.

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The most prominent negative point was that relating to exhaustion throughout the year – in the questionnaires this was highlighted by 28/48 of the trainees and was a focal point in all of the interviews.

Those who continued into teacher training straight from university (in both subjects) were mostly independent, being able to find things out for themselves, and looked for opportunities whilst in school. However, in both subjects mature trainee teachers reported they needed help to carry out their plans/tasks in school.

The next step in this research is to explore, with greater depth, the links between the school placement and positive/negatives for each gender, continuity of education and mature trainee needs, and work-life balance impacting on trainees' personal lives during school placements. This study has shown us that, as trainers of professionals, we need a greater understanding of these factors in order to help us retain trainees during training and in their first appointments as newly qualified teachers.

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# An Investigation into Teacher Wellbeing During the Teacher Training Year

## Appendix 1: Settling into Teaching Practice Schools

The purpose of this survey is to explore issues faced by you in adapting to the school environment during your Phase 1 placement. There are no right or wrong answers – please be honest. The survey is optional and your

responses will not be used to identify you individually. The data you provide will help us, mentors, school coordinators and future trainees to identify the problems associated with settling into schools.

Is your own education continuous from school to PGCE?	Yes	No
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1. Please indicate **as many of the following statements** that describe your reasons for choosing the PGCE course.

• The qualification at the end of the course would enable me to get a good job when I finish.	
• The course will help me to develop knowledge and skills that will be useful later on.	
• I wanted a challenge to develop as a person, broaden my horizons and face new challenges	
• The opportunity for an active social life attracted me.	
• I would be able to study a subject in depth, and take an interesting and stimulating course.	
• I basically wanted to try to prove to myself that I can become a teacher.	
• Having done well at school, it seemed to be the natural thing to go on to do.	
• It would give me another year to decide what I really wanted to do later on	
• I suppose it was a mixture of other people's expectations and no obvious alternative.	
• I rather drifted into the course without deciding what I really wanted to do.	

2. Please indicate **always, often, rarely or never** to each of the following statements.

	always	often	rarely	never
• I find out for myself what to do before being told.				
• I automatically look for opportunities.				
• I need help to carry out plans and tasks.				

# An Investigation into Teacher Wellbeing During the Teacher Training Year

3. In the box below, **please summarise any problems or issues** in adapting to, or coping with, being in a school as a trainee teacher. For each one, please **feel free to suggest how the school could have helped you**. Please do not use school or staff names.

Problem/Issue	Help strategy

If you would like to be involved in a follow-up interview, please write your name below.

Thank you for completing this survey.

# An Investigation into Teacher Wellbeing During the Teacher Training Year

## Appendix 2 Settling into Teaching Practice – End of Phase 2

Thank you for completing this questionnaire; your participation is voluntary.

Please tick as appropriate: Male  Female

Is your education continuous from school to PGCE? Yes  No

1. How did you find the transition from Phase 1 to Phase 2 (please tick the appropriate box):

Easy  Generally OK  More difficult than I expected

2. What were your **two** most memorable/enjoyable moments during your Phase 2 teaching practice?

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3. If you had any, what were your **two** lowest points during your Phase 2 teaching practice?

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4. Do you feel that the University could do anymore to prepare you for your teaching practice?  
If so, please can you provide some practical suggestions?

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5. Please tick **which** of the following boxes that you feel describe any of your Phase 2 teaching practice:

Really enjoyed it  Exhausting  Stressful  Rewarding  Challenging

Decreased my confidence  Fun/Exciting  Boosted my confidence

6. Do you have any specific advice that would be useful to next year's trainee teachers?

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