How does your teacher identity fit in with the culture of teaching and the organization?

Angela Gault

Through learning we re-create ourselves. Through learning we become able to do something we were never able to do.

(Senge 2007: 13)

Your early professional development can be likened to a journey. This chapter considers the journey as it progresses through the professional landscapes and climates of your various school or college learning contexts. For simplicity, the term ‘school’ is used throughout although you may be working in a college. You are equipped with guides in the form of colleagues, and various maps in the guise of policy documents, curriculum plans, and assessment descriptors to help inform your direction for development. Milestones along the way will mark your achievements towards meeting the various Q and G standards (TDA 2007). You will accrue professional knowledge and hone professional skills during your professional working life (see Chapter 2). However, the process of developing your teacher identity requires something even more fundamental from you. It is important to appreciate that your journey is not only physical but also emotional and psychological. This is because as you learn how to be a professional your identity will evolve. In order to ‘fit in’ and become a teacher you will meet some essential personal and professional demands, entitled professional attributes (see Appendix 1 Q1 and Q2).

This chapter explores how you can develop your professional attributes by negotiating the terrain and climate of your learning contexts. It is important that you appreciate the significance of the social ‘landscapes’ and ‘climates’ within your schools and understand how to ‘read’ the various roles, interests and power dynamics at work. This journey into developing your professional identity reaches
into the heart of why you want to teach and what kind of teacher you want to become.

What are professional attributes?

The term 'professional attributes' is used to identify one of the three core strands of the professional standards (TDA 2007, see Chapter 2) but can also be seen as a generic term for all aspects of professional behaviour associated with our values and attitudes, such as 'commitment' and 'high expectations'. Some of these professional attributes can be quite difficult to 'evidence'. For example, how do you show that you have high expectations of children?

"Pupils know I expect them to do well because I tell them they should get all of the answers right. (Amy, one-year PGCE, two weeks into her first teaching practice)"

However, this standard reaches far deeper than expecting learners to do well on tests. For example, it may be quite easy for the learners to get all of the answers right because the questions the teacher set were not demanding enough in the first place. What you teach, why and how, all reveal aspects of your teacher expectations, and these expectations are conveyed to learners.

Becoming and being a teacher is not just an academic exercise, it is an emotional undertaking (Hargreaves 1995; Hobson and Malderz 2005) which takes place within particular learning situations (Lave and Wenger 1991). In order to begin thinking about, and understanding, what is meant by 'professional attributes', it is useful to reflect on what it 'feels' like to behave as a teacher in typical teacher situations.

'Being' a teacher in the classroom

"The first time I stood in front of a class was so scary. I had prepared everything I could in advance so I thought I was OK, but once the class was there I felt a weight pressing on my throat, my mouth went dry and my heart was thumping. (Mahmoud, GTP music, after his first lesson)"

Think about how it felt when you stood up in front of a class for the first time to teach a lesson. Suddenly all eyes are on you. The responsibility is yours. You have your lesson plan but now is the time to bring it to life. In order to succeed you have to adopt the persona of a teacher. This begins with the messages you give to pupils through your choice of attire. It also involves your body language, how and where you position yourself in relation to the pupils, and your voice, how you speak as well as what you say and when. You begin to feel what it is like to take on a very specific role or identity, and this is likely to be a very new experience for you.

Lynne describes how 'talking like a teacher' helped her to establish her authority with pupils and convey her professional values:

"I am happy now with my use of professional language. I have discovered that by using such language as soon as I entered the classroom, I experienced less resistance from pupils than I expected. I realize that it is important to continue using professional language at all times so that authority is maintained within the classroom. (Lynne, three-year BEd primary on her first teaching practice)"

How you speak to pupils conveys messages and expectations. Professional language:

- is formal and authoritative in tone;
- models standard English;
- avoids personal and negative comments;
- is positive and focuses on learning.

Reflective task 5.1 Using professional language in the classroom

1. What might the impact be upon pupil self-esteem and the learning environment in each paired example in Table 5.1?
2. Does anything here resonate with your own practice? What effective practices can you embed? What changes do you need to make?

You may adopt the role of teacher with ease, or it may take some time. You may find it easy with some classes; less so with others. Nevertheless, how you feel, act and speak as a teacher will reveal your fundamental values and beliefs about what it means to be a teacher. This is more than acting; it is 'being'. Your
Table 5.1  Examples of contrasting teacher talk

| Shush up you noisy lot! | Five seconds to finish off your point and then we'll come back together as a class to share ideas. |
| Stop messing about! | Let's see how you are getting on with this... |
| When are you guys going to learn? | This is quite difficult but I know you can do it. How about if... |
| You are being stupid now. | I'll ask you again in a moment - so be ready to help us out. |

actions and words become an embodiment of your professional attributes. If you really believe that your pupils can achieve their potential, or even beyond it, because you can’t be sure what that potential really might be, then this will be evident from your interactions with them. Likewise, if your new school or department is one where teachers have low expectations, then they will have shown it, and their pupils will know, indicated by the comment: ‘I don’t know why you’re bothering. We’re the thick class!’ (Darren, 15-year-old student, to his new teacher).

Reflective task 5.2  Responding to pupils in the classroom

1. How would you deal with this kind of comment?
2. Look at the professional attributes standards (Appendix 1). Your response would make visible your professional attributes, demonstrating your fundamental beliefs about the purposes of education. Do you have any real examples that evidence your professional attributes in this way?

'Being' a teacher with colleagues

Your pupils are very important but they are not your only 'audience'. Becoming a teacher involves crucial interactions with other professionals. At first these will be teacher colleagues and teaching assistants. As your experience grows, and certainly after your induction year, you could be dealing directly with professionals such as speech therapists, social workers and community health workers. Here, however, we are concerned with your initial encounters, as a trainee or NQT, with those close colleagues who will be supporting you.

Reflective task 5.3  Creating a first impression

1. What impression of herself did this beginning teacher create in the eyes of her new colleagues?
2. What impression was she perhaps trying to make?
3. Where did she go wrong?

'Being' a teacher in the school

Your feelings towards the type of school you are placed in and the way you respond to people and situations can influence your conduct as a beginning teacher. Consider the reflections of Paul and Jenny below:

"I was really looking forward to meeting my mentor but kind of nervous as well. I hoped I could talk to him easily because I had to rely on him to guide me through the next ten weeks."

(Sarah, one-year science PGCE, on meeting her first mentor)

Think about how you felt when you met your new teacher colleagues for the first time. It would be typical in this situation for you to have felt unsure. You may have found it difficult to join in their professional, or work-related, conversations. This is not just because you don’t know them very well, although this is part of it, but you don’t really understand what/who they are talking about on a professional level. You do not yet belong to their ‘group culture’ and you are not tuned into their professional attributes or values, their language and the specific characteristics of their work place. If you are thinking at this point that you have never had difficulties in joining in such conversations then either your teacher colleagues were extremely accommodating to you, or your ‘reading’ of the situation may not have been entirely reliable.

"Well, she challenged something the Assistant Head said in the staff room and we nearly fell off our chairs."

(school mentor about her new trainee, two days into teaching practice)
anything you do for them. My mentor told me that that although the pupils' GCSE results appeared to be good, in fact many of the pupils here are underachieving. Pupil engagement and motivation became key challenges for me. I wish I had begun my placement with a more open mind.

(Paul, PGCE mathematics trainee, two weeks into second teaching practice)

I was dreading my placement school. Everyone said it was tough. When I got there, I was amazed. The teachers were great, everyone was so friendly and supportive and OK some of the kids were challenging but I really loved being there. It was like an oasis of calm – once you got inside those locked gates that is.

(Jenny, GTP ICT trainee reflecting on second school placement)

If you are a subject teacher then you will also have to fit into your department and this will have its own particular ethos or culture. Ball and Goodson (1986) write about the ‘separateness and ideologically distinct social and institutional roles’ of subject specialists. Each departmental ethos may, or may not, mirror or even complement the philosophy of the whole school (or yours). This can create tensions for beginning teachers who are trying to fit into their school department. Similar conflicts can arise if you are working across phases, where for example there might be different approaches for different year groups (or key stages).

Joining the teacher culture and making relationships

If you want to be a teacher then you need to find a way into the general teacher culture and into your subject culture. Relationships with your colleagues are essential to you. They will support you teaching your classes and working alongside them will help you become part of a team, school and wider professional culture. Belonging to a team or department involves sharing beliefs and behaviours (see Case Study 5.1).

Case Study 5.1 Adapting to different school cultures

Phil was a PGCE secondary trainee who, as part of his training, spent a week in a primary school between his two secondary placements. He wrote:

"At Primary School, the pupils led their lessons to some extent. The discussion sessions allowed them to think about a topic, be creative and express their opinions... These activities then helped the teacher decide how to direct the lesson. This was an aspect of differentiation I had not considered before. These approaches gave the pupils responsibility for their learning and were really refreshing to observe. I intend to run discussion sessions in my next placement."

However, several weeks later, Phil wrote:

"The teaching style in my school is extremely teacher-led, with the pupils trying to learn what the teacher is telling them in the way that the teacher is telling them. I feel very nervous about implementing the approaches I have planned as they will 'go against the grain' in my secondary school."

Phil came up against what Hargreaves calls 'cultures of teaching' (1995: 85), in finding the views of his department colleagues to be different from his own. Other studies have explored the relationship between professional communities and new members of the community. Lave and Wenger (1991) describe how relationships between people working toward the same goals create members of a 'community of practice'. Novice members of such communities begin as 'peripheral participants' and develop their expertise (and become more central) by working alongside more expert others. The newcomers appropriate professional practice (including necessary knowledge and technical skills) through involvement in the school community (considered further in Chapter 6).

Hodges (1998: 286) stresses the importance of wanting to belong to the group and how this desire will influence 'the quality of participation' and therefore the quality of belonging. Sacks (2005: 15) further explains that teachers 'construct their own ideas of "how to be", "how to act" and "how to understand" their work' and that this process is one that is constantly negotiated with others.

Thus we can see learning to become a teacher as a socio-cultural process and, drawing on Vygotsky (1978), at the heart of this process is professional language or 'teacher discourse'. Teachers use discourse both to describe their work and to learn through their work (Juraisë-Harbisson and Rex 2010: 268). These conversations (and non-verbal communications) arise within educational structures, such as schools and subject departments, and can range from formal meetings to casual conversations.

In addition, teachers learn by 'thinking as teachers' and 'being teachers' in a variety of teacher situations or contexts. This point links back to the significance and nature of teacher cultures or communities of practice. In order to learn you need to find ways of belonging, and this will require you to 'read' social situations
and critically reflect upon them in order to participate effectively. As ten Dam and Blom (2006: 656, emphasis added) have pointed out, ‘Participation is thus both a learning objective and a means of learning. Learning through participation as described above, however, demands “reflection”’.

**Typical difficulties facing beginning teachers**

**Praxis shock**

The first experience of beginning teaching has been described as a potential ‘praxis shock’ (Veenman 1984; Kelchtermans and Ballet 2002a; Smagorinsky et al 2004). This particular challenge arises when beginning teachers try to adopt a professional identity and purpose in an unfamiliar, perhaps conflicting, context. In other words the reality of being a teacher does not match what was expected. In order to be able to recognize this ‘praxis shock’, and the feelings of vulnerability and uncertainty that can accompany it, you will need a good understanding of yourself and your values.

**Knowing yourself**

What kind of person are you? Do you have a strong sense of belief in yourself and your judgements? Do you lack confidence? Are you instinctive? Are you sensitive to those around you? Do you like to talk? Are you a good listener? What are your values? How far do you reflect on events and situations in order to learn from them? Are you an idealist or a fatalist? (see Chapter 8). These more personal, or affective, aspects of yourself, which are often called your inter- and intrapersonal skills, will impact directly upon your capacity to learn how to be a teacher in your school.

As highlighted in Chapter 3, your identity and your aspirations will have been shaped by your previous life and educational experiences, also known as your narrative or biographical perspective (Carter and Doyle 1996; Goodson 1996). However, although you will have been influenced by your own teachers and educational experiences, you are entering new territory, and as a teacher, not a learner.

**Using critical reflection**

Your main allies on this professional learning journey are the personal and developing professional qualities within yourself (your professional attributes), your colleagues and most importantly your capacity to learn within different contexts. Your principle learning tool is that of critical reflection and it is most effectively employed in collaboration with others within different learning situations (Brookfield 1995; Larrivee 2000; Moon 2000). Through critical reflection you will deepen your understanding and appreciation of the milieu of situations, behaviours and discourse which is school life. Critical reflection enables you to solve problems. It prepares you for what is round the next corner.

So what do you reflect about and what makes reflection ‘critical’? Reflection begins when you re-wind the story of an incident or event in your head and it starts to change from a sequence of events in chronological order into a sequence of questions with possible answers. You move from the ‘what’, and when’, to the ‘why and how’. Why did this happen as it did? How could I have behaved differently? Why would action x have been a better choice than action y? When you add other perspectives and possible interpretations from your colleagues and your reading into the mix, and thereby reach even deeper understandings and possible strategies for practice, then you are reflecting critically. As a result you will be learning and developing your professional identity.

“Reflection is recognized as a key means by which teachers can become more in tune with their sense of self and with a deep understanding of how this self fits into a larger context which involves others; in other words, reflection is a factor in the shaping of identity.”

(Beauchamp and Thomas 2009: 182)

For reflective practice to be meaningful, and thereby lead to professional learning, it needs to link into theory. It should be triggered by, and impact upon, practice.

**Learning to be a teacher in a professional context**

You may be on a teaching placement or you may have been appointed to a teaching post. You are excited and possibly apprehensive and you are about to begin the process of fitting into this new context. You bring with you your teaching knowledge and skills but also your personal values and professional attributes. Even if you know the school, perhaps having worked there as a teaching assistant or as an ex-student, you will be seeing it through different eyes and people will also see you differently.

University tutors’ experiences of working with beginning teachers, together with relevant research (Hodkinson and Hodkinson 1997; Findlay 2006; Malm 2009), confirm that your ability to ‘read’ your terrain or school context and to appreciate how your colleagues are also reading and shaping this context, are vital to your success.
Case Study 5.2 Creating a first impression

Hannah

Hannah arrived at her school in the spring term when the school was undergoing a period of major readjustment following the arrival of a new headteacher. Staff were unsettled. Hannah bounced in very loudly, full of enthusiasm and energy. When she disappeared at lunch time on day one to go off site, as she had on her first placement, her new colleagues wondered where she was. When they found out she went for a walk to find somewhere for a smoke, they were not impressed.

Hannah was very keen to make her mark. During day two she observed the subject leader’s lesson and at the end of it, when the subject leader asked for students to leave their exercise books on the table on the way out, Hannah remarked, ‘You needn’t do it like that,’ and proceeded to implement the method she had learned on her first placement. Hannah thought she was being helpful, showing initiative and modelling a ‘better’ approach. The subject leader took a different view.

Reflective task 5.4 Thinking about Hannah’s situation

Why did things start to go wrong for Hannah?
1. Put yourself in the subject leader’s shoes. How might you have felt about Hannah’s intervention?
2. What did Hannah want to achieve? Can you think of an alternative approach that she may have taken?
3. Which professional attributes was she clearly failing to meet?

Reflecting on Hannah’s situation

So what went wrong for Hannah? You may think it obvious, but it was not obvious to her. You may think that Hannah’s ideas and motives were sound but that she went about things in the wrong way. Hannah was not sensitive to her new context and the ways her new colleagues behaved. She did not understand her ‘place’ as a newcomer. Hannah did not experience any initial ‘praxis shock’ (Kelchtermans and Ballet 2002a). That experience came later, when it was much harder to make the necessary adjustments and rebuild relationships.

Hannah assumed that it was appropriate to leave the premises to have a smoke because this had been accepted on her first placement. She knew that her second school was very different in terms of the catchment area and examination results, but had not considered how the staff culture may also be very different. Hannah did not appreciate that she needed to spend time getting to know her colleagues in order to find out about the department culture and expectations. As Van Maanen (1988: 3) explains, ‘culture is not itself visible’. Instead, teacher culture is made visible by the ways colleagues behave and interact. Therefore it is wise to watch and listen before acting or reacting.

Hannah was a confident person who felt comfortable with the teacher identity she had established on her first placement. However she did not expect her new school colleagues to have different values and expectations. In fact theirs was a very different community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991). Hannah did not spend any time trying to ‘read’ this new social landscape. She did not begin to ‘fit in’ and therefore she struggled to establish her teacher identity in her new school.

“Successful socialisation is contingent not only on the individuals located at the heart of the process, but equally on the explicitly promoted school ethos, as well as the tacitly agreed rules, norms and values guiding pupils and staff in their day-to-day behaviour towards each other.” (Jones 2005: 517)

In addition, Hannah did not appreciate her place and status in a senior teacher’s classroom. For example, had she said to the subject leader that in her previous school she had been encouraged to collect the books in a particular way and asked whether it would be an appropriate method, then the conversation may have developed into a comparison of different schools and students and how one method may be appropriate in one school (perhaps where pupils are likely to leave without handing work in) but not be as necessary in another.

Unfortunately this incident, together with several others, served to sour the relationship between the trainee and her colleagues. Hannah was placed in the category of ‘trainees who think they know everything’.

What we can learn from Hannah?

A key factor underpinning Hannah’s difficulty was her inability or unwillingness to critically reflect. Her case could support McIntyre’s (1993) view that beginning teachers do not have sufficient experience to engage in reflective practice. Instead
they need to engage in ‘practical theorizing’ whereby they ‘learn in their practice from other people’s ideas, both those of experienced practitioners and those of educational researchers and scholars’ (Hagger and McIntyre 2006: 58, in Hagger et al. 2008:163).

However, this ‘apprenticeship’ model is a very limited view of the capacity of most trainee teachers. Practical theorizing gave Hannah practices that worked for her on her first placement but these behaviours did not transfer successfully into her new school. The difficulties she faced could only be ‘resolved fully through critical reflection. It was not enough simply to remodel herself on her new colleagues’ behaviour. In order to gain QTS Hannah had to reach a deeper understanding of her new position and realign her professional values in order to acquire a teacher identity that was acceptable in her new context.

**Reflecting on theory and strategic approaches**

Roberts and Graham (2008), drew from the work of Lacey (1977) and Zeichner and Tabachnick (1985), to identify a sequence of three social strategies that may be useful for beginning teachers to help them ‘fit in’ to their schools and make progress in their professional learning. The first is relevant here, and it is called ‘promoting conformity’. This strategy involves compliance with the demands of the learning context.

In order to ‘comply’, beginning teachers need to use their social skills to ‘read’ the school and subject culture while building relationships with colleagues. Induction into school and subject cultures involves adaptation to and adoption of the language and practices of the group (Vygotsky 1978, ten Dam and Blom 2006). As we have seen, Hannah did none of these things. It is helpful to recall Lave and Wenger’s ideas about ‘community of practice’ and how only through quality participation can beginning teachers develop their identities and professional practice (Hodges 1998). It is also worth reflecting on Hagger et al.’s (2008) finding that an acceptance of context and a willingness to ‘make things work’ are necessary approaches to learning effectively in new settings.

**Table 5.2 Examples of contrasting teacher talk**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>What kinds of schools have you worked in to date? How did you learn about your new schools?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>If you are beginning your teacher training If you are at least halfway through your teacher training If you are a newly or recently qualified teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>To what extent is the ‘culture’ of your first school congruent with your expectations, values and ideas about teaching? What ‘culture clashes’ have you experienced to date in your placement schools, and how have you dealt with these? How did apply for your first teaching post? Did you select the school? On what basis? How comfortable are you that your values are congruent with those of the organization?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>How easy or difficult is ‘fitting in’ proving to be? What reasons would you give for this? Have you found it easier to ‘fit in’ in some schools than in others? Why/why not? In what ways is being a qualified teacher easier, and in what ways is it more difficult, in respect of ‘fitting in’ to the school culture?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>To what extent will you need to ‘conform’ to the culture of your school? How will you do this? What is to be gained by conforming to organizational culture? What are the disadvantages? In what ways have expectations, values and ideas about teaching have changed since your first experience of a school as a professional?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Strategic approaches in practice**

So far we have considered a case in which a beginning teacher did not acknowledge, let alone adjust to, the specific natures of her school context and failed therefore to build positive relationships with her colleagues. In Case Study 5.3 the beginning teacher has taken those initial steps of fitting into a new learning community and then finds himself not being given the support needed to progress.
Case Study 5.3 Using reflection to fill gaps in mentoring support

Ravin

“I was thrown into the proverbial deep end and allowed to sink or swim. Thankfully, I swear and very quickly found myself being left alone with a class whilst my mentor got on with something else. This meant I was not learning as much as I should. By the third week of my placement, I found myself becoming increasingly frustrated with my mentor. However, I found it difficult to assert myself for fear of rocking the boat or, my mentor becoming increasingly critical and perhaps even suggesting that I fail. I find myself with increasing frequency, having to bite my tongue and accept things that normally I would not.

I started to question my mentor’s motives. Is she seizing the chance to get other work done? Or, does she believe this is how I will learn, as she claims? I believe the former is more likely.

I do not feel that I can trust my mentor or her advice, as I do not feel that she has had my best interests at heart. Instead, I have been using the advice and feedback of another teacher in the department. It seems as if all of my constructive criticism has come from her and any issues that I have had, she has dealt with them for me. In a way, she has become my unofficial mentor.”

Reflecting on Ravin’s situation

Unfortunately Ravin’s mentor adopted a ‘sink or swim’ approach to training, which was not what Ravin was expecting but it can happen (Robson and Malderez 2005: 122). Ravin’s capacity for reflection and analysis is strong. His initial reading of the situation was that the mentor left him to get on with it because she was busy, and because he was managing. When he did express some concerns about his ability to manage a class, the mentor still felt that she could leave him alone with them. Clearly this confirmed Ravin’s growing doubts about her commitment to his training, and therefore to him.

Ravin wanted mentor support to help him progress. He had clear expectations of his mentor and she was not meeting them. The ensuing conflict between his expectations and reality created anxiety and frustration for him: he was experiencing ‘praxis shock’ (Kelchtermans and Balte 2002a). Ravin had obviously considered the options open to him. He was only too aware of the significance of status and power relations, learning to ‘bite his tongue’. This is not an uncommon syndrome, as Roberts and Graham (2008: 1402) have pointed out: ‘trainees, as powerless newcomers, have an overriding need for security and inclusion in the school community. They do this by fitting in and avoiding confrontations with powerful staff, of whom the mentor is seen as most crucial to their survival.’

Ravin continued to manage his classes alone but was frustrated that he was not learning how to develop as a teacher and participate fully as a member of the department (Lave and Wenger 1991; Sachs 2005). His response was to take control in the only way available to him, by adopting another member of staff as an unofficial mentor.

Learning from Ravin’s experiences

Clearly ‘fitting in’ is not a one-way process. Ravin was eager to belong and learn but his mentor did not fulfill her expected role. Thankfully Ravin exhibited an essential teacher characteristic, that of resilience (Castro et al. 2010). Ravin also sought help, and adopted a willing colleague to be his unofficial mentor.

‘Promoting conformity’ (Roberts and Graham 2008) or complying in order to ‘fit in’, has been discussed earlier in connection with Hannah. Drawing from Lacey (1977), Roberts and Graham present two further strategies which are relevant here: ‘passive self maintenance’ and ‘strategic redefinition’. These are presented below as stages in learning to ‘fit in’ and may resonate with your own experience.


Ravin read his situation and realized that to a certain extent he had to accept it, so he engaged in ‘passive self maintenance’ for a while. He accepted what he could not change. However, his understanding of his situation led him to appreciate that he could affect some advantage, namely by adopting another mentor. Ravin achieves ‘strategic redefinition’ and begins to appreciate that even from a position of perceived powerlessness he was able to exercise some control over his professional development.

Beginning teachers have high expectations of the schools in which they are placed. Sometimes these expectations are unrealistic, and need to be revised; even the most willing and supportive mentor can be pulled in different directions in a busy week. Sometimes, even realistic expectations are not realized. Nearly qualified teachers, even with an entitlement to mentoring in their induction year, often find a large gap between the support they had while training and once qualified. Tools for reflection, designed to improve your practice and help you make progress, are to be found throughout this book and will help to mitigate these problems.
Reflective task 5.6a Using reflective tools to augment school support

1. From the list in Figure 5.1, based on the findings of Hobson et al. (2009a) in relation to possible shortfalls in mentoring support, identify one area where school support, for whatever reason, may not be meeting your expectations.

2. On the action plan sheet (Appendix 4) note what this area is and at least one target for improvement. Think about how other frameworks for reflection in this book might help you.

**Figure 5.1 Augmenting mentor support**

For example, feedback on a lesson observation may reveal that you need to improve your questioning skills. You are not being sufficiently 'challenged' in school to be creative in the way you question pupils. You set yourself a target of using more creative ways of questioning one class you are teaching. What support does this book provide to help you?

---

**Professional socialization**

What you are doing, as you engage in the processes above, is what is often called 'professional socialization'; you are learning to fit in and engage with the organization rather than remaining on the outside as a victim of its imperfections.

From the field of Health, the Hinshaw-Davis model of socialization for trainee nurses can provide a useful comparison with the strategies outlined above in Table 5.2 (see Figure 5.2). This model goes as far as 'acceptance'. The Roberts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1 Promoting conformity</th>
<th>What successful beginning teachers do</th>
<th>How they feel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✪ Plenty of observing and listening</td>
<td>✪ Enthusiastic and perhaps apprehensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✪ People and situations</td>
<td>✪ A desire to 'fit in' and be seen as a teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✪ Keep notes as there is too much to remember, e.g. names and information</td>
<td>✪ Concern that there is so much to find out and remember</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✪ Show enthusiasm and a willingness to be involved</td>
<td>✪ A desire to be successful and avoid mistakes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 2 Passive self-maintenance</th>
<th>What successful beginning teachers do</th>
<th>How they feel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✪ 'Read' accurately the situation in which they find themselves.</td>
<td>✪ Dissatisfaction at need to conform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✪ Recognize the need to comply with this situation and determine to do so</td>
<td>✪ Tensions stemming from perceived differences in values and attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✪ Use conscious tactics to maintain compliance</td>
<td>✪ Disappointment at perceived unsatisfactory relationship with mentor and/or other colleagues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 3 Strategic redefinition</th>
<th>What successful beginning teachers do</th>
<th>How they feel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✪ 'Look and listen' to achieve compliance</td>
<td>✪ Sensitive to their personal and professional selves but also the needs of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✪ Develop strategies to change how they are perceived by colleagues</td>
<td>✪ Confident in their own developing pedagogical and subject knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✪ Proactively seek opportunities to shape and advance their professional development</td>
<td>✪ Increasingly part of the 'community of practice'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✪ Comfortable about, or at least reconciled to, the need to be professionally proactive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: After Roberts and Graham 2008: 1402
The table below presents a sequence for reflection on socialization strategies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socialization strategies</th>
<th>Sequence for reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation expectations</td>
<td>Emerging awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Induction</td>
<td>What information do I need? Where do I get information from? What is expected of me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitting in compliance</td>
<td>Who are my colleagues? What are their roles and responsibilities? What do they expect of me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building relationships with significant others</td>
<td>Are there any difficulties, tensions or conflicts eg. concerning policy or procedures between colleagues and myself and my colleagues? Can I describe these tensions? How do I feel about this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of tensions/conflicts/oscillation</td>
<td>Am I able to get the most from this placement? To what extent am I meeting requirements? What are the opportunities and barriers here?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.3 Socialization matrix for beginning teachers

Source: Developed from Moon's schema of reflective activity; Roberts & Graham's socialization strategies and the Hinshaw-Davis Model of Socialisation.

---

The diagram illustrates a model of professional socialisation adapted from Lacey (1997) and Roberts and Graham (2000). The model is represented as a sequence of stages, each with specific questions and considerations for beginning teachers. The model is designed to help teachers navigate the complexities of their role, focusing on the nature of their learning experiences and the broader context in which they operate.
Reflective task 5.6b

1. Using the socialization matrix as a guide, identify the questions you need to answer in order to succeed in your action plan.
2. Identify sources of help from within this book to support your learning and finalize your action plan (Appendix 4).

Summary

This chapter has presented critical reflection as central to the process of acquiring a professional identity within different professional learning cultures and thereby developing as a teacher.

Your teacher education course, specifically the placement experience, can be seen as a process designed to socialize you into the accepted behaviours and norms of being a teacher. Phelan (2001: 584) presents this as 'an integrating rather than a radicalizing role'. A key argument in this chapter is that the best teacher education supports integration, but also should provide a basis for future radicalization. That is to say, you need to know how to conform, but you should also learn how to become an innovative teacher who can contribute to changes in teaching. It is clear that adopting a teacher identity and having a sense of belonging to a teacher culture are necessary for you to develop professionally. Your acquisition of professional attributes becomes an outward display of your inner values and beliefs about learning and teaching. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, your journey towards becoming a teacher is both cognitive and affective.

Conclusion

Ideally your learning context is an environment, or community of practice, (Lave and Wenger 1991) that will support your professional development. As you progress professionally you will use critical reflection to move your knowledge, understanding and performance towards that of your more experienced colleagues. Teacher socialization, however, can cause the progress to falter. Real situations are sometimes less than ideal training contexts, and beginning teachers need to be critically reflective and active agents in their learning. From a position of 'fitting in' or 'integration', you are able to move into full participation in your professional learning. If the circumstances are not 'ideal' or 'supportive', you will have to find a 'best fit' position from which to look for ways to change situations or take advantage of any professional development opportunities that arise (Lacey 1977). The uncertainties and problems faced on placement can appear to be negative experiences. However, it is important to take a longer term view and see them as opportunities to learn. Helsing confirms the importance of uncertainty, even confusion, in the developmental process as 'a reflective practitioner can recognize these feelings as opportunities for growth, learning, and increased success' (2007: 1323).

In the long run 'a smooth ride' in which you do not learn to be proactive and independent may not be good preparation for a teaching career in a fast-changing world and it is not a good training ground for independence, leadership and innovative practice.

Key learning points

1. Learning how to become a teacher:
   - is an emotional and psychological undertaking;
   - involves acquiring a new professional identity;
   - involves developing professional attributes or qualities;
   - involves critical reflection.
2. Professional attributes reflect your values which are revealed by such things as your appearance, body language, voice and actions.
3. Professional attributes are an expression of your teacher identity.
4. Learning how to be a teacher is a social activity. You must learn how to belong to a teacher culture and every learning setting is different.
5. You may experience praxis shock – a clash between your ideals and the realities of school life.
6. Critical reflection will help you to make sense of yourself, other people and situations so that you can reach deeper understandings and find possible solutions to future challenges.
7. Critical reflection will help you to move from the periphery to participate in the centre of professional life.
8. There is a hierarchy of socialization that can help you to learn how to belong and develop your teacher identity:
   - learn how to fit in by watching, listening and sensitively participating;
   - build relationships;
   - recognize problems or tensions;
   - re-position yourself to take advantage of, or even create opportunities.
9. Your initial goal is to integrate and develop a 'working' teacher identity. However, eventually you may use your 'insider' understanding to make innovations and help to transform education.
10. An unproblematic placement may seem desirable but it is highly unusual. Reflective practice tools help you to supplement and augment any perceived ‘gaps’ in support and solve problems.