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## A Personalised Needs-Led Group Approach to Induction: Perceptions of Early Academics in a University School of Education

Joy Jarvis

*University of Hertfordshire*, [jjarvis@herts.ac.uk](mailto:jjarvis@herts.ac.uk)

Claire Dickerson

*University of Hertfordshire*, [j.e.c.dickerson@herts.ac.uk](mailto:j.e.c.dickerson@herts.ac.uk)

Leo Chivers

*University of Hertfordshire*

Chris Collins

*University of Hertfordshire*

Libby Lee

*University of Hertfordshire*

*See next page for additional authors*

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# A Personalised Needs-Led Group Approach to Induction: Perceptions of Early Academics in a University School of Education

## **Authors**

Joy Jarvis, Claire Dickerson, Leo Chivers, Chris Collins, Libby Lee, Roger Levy, and Dianne Solly

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Joy Jarvis  
Claire Dickerson  
Leo Chivers  
Chris Collins  
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Roger Levy  
Dianne Solly  
University of Hertfordshire

*Abstract: Members of staff joining a school of education often have extensive experience in practice but not in academia and the university setting may present a complex diversity of roles, ways of working, values and goals. Colleagues may face issues of understanding the organisational structure and culture, changing identities, and concerns about their academic reading and writing abilities. This paper presents a study designed to examine the efficacy of a personalised needs-led self-study group approach to induction for experienced professionals joining a University School of Education. The approach was new to both current staff members and the four early academic staff, most of whom were teacher educators. In group sessions new colleagues had space for dialogue and story-telling based on their experiences, and created visual images for reflection and discussion with group members. Progressive group activities included presentations at local and international conferences, and academic writing.*

*The purpose of the research reported here was to examine the efficacy of the self-study group as part of an induction process; exploring the developing professional identity of the new staff, the role of the group, and the effects of collecting visual research data for reflection and analysis of personal and group themes. New colleagues prepared a reflective account of their experiences of the group and their developing professional identity, took part in an evaluation workshop, and responded to questions on the longer term impact of the group. Outcomes of the group process included participants' increased confidence to work in the context of complexity, and the ability to embrace their changing identities. A self-study group process can help facilitate the development of the professionals needed to work in the dynamic context of the university of today and is likely to have implications for a range of organisational settings.*

## Overview

This research, undertaken collaboratively by the writers of this paper, was designed to examine the efficacy of a needs-led self-study ('new academic') group as part of a staff induction process within a University School of Education. It explored the developing professional identity of early academics (most of whom were teacher educators), the role of the group and the effects of collecting visual research data for reflection and analysis of personal and group themes. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate, through the presentation of their accounts, how the four new members of staff explored the nature of their emerging identities and the outcomes of this process in relation to a professional development approach.

## Setting the Context

### The Setting for this Study

This study is set within a School of Education within a UK University with a student community of more than 24,000. The School of Education comprises some fifty academic staff with a wide range of work-place based connections including partnerships with schools and other educational provisions. Programmes available within the School include initial teacher education, doctoral and masters courses for qualified and experienced teachers and undergraduate and post graduate courses for teaching assistants, for practitioners working with children in a range of settings and those with an academic interest in the field of education. The School also collaborates in a range of international programmes.

### Staff Induction within Schools of Education in UK Universities

The guidelines published by the UK Higher Education Academy (HEA) Subject Centre for Education, ESCalate, are designed to support new teacher educators to manage their own professional development and to inform the review of the induction experience of new teacher educators within higher education settings in the UK (Boyd et al, 2011). Most new members of staff in schools of education will be working within teacher education programmes, so the literature on teacher educator induction is important in this work. Other new members of staff will be teaching or researching in education more generally and may be working with students who will work with young children in multidisciplinary contexts. The induction process we are considering relates to experienced professionals who have been working in practice and who are joining a university to become lecturers.

The authors of the HEA report state that 'Induction is taken to mean the first three years after appointment to a higher education academic role from previous careers in schools or colleges' (Boyd et al, 2011:7). Reflecting the challenges posed by the organisational/strategic and the individual approaches to induction, they emphasise personalised approaches within the setting of 'developing learning communities' (Boyd et al, 2007:3). Basing her views on the findings of a study commissioned by ESCalate to investigate the induction provision for teacher educators, Murray (2008:131), one of the authors of the guidelines, '...suggests that a coherent, well-planned and individualised induction curriculum for [New Teacher Educators'] learning should be implemented and evaluated, at the micro-levels of the department, through a series of individual and communal work-based learning activities...'. Overall, (Murray, 2008:117) summarises the findings from the ESCalate study as follows:

‘...The findings indicate that most induction provision occurs within teacher education departments, often at the micro levels of the teaching team. It is therefore best understood as work-based learning. Whilst the study found some examples of positive induction experiences, it also raises concerns about the consistency, quality and nature of other induction provision in teacher education.’

### **Issues for New Colleagues**

#### ***Issues in Relation to Identity and Values***

New colleagues joining a school of education are experienced professionals in a particular field. Often they come from schools, colleges or advisory teaching services and have had years of experience of teaching, working in teams and often of leadership and management. Other new colleagues may come from allied professions such as health or social work and again they have had experience in practice but not usually in academic settings. They bring with them the values, assumptions and ways of working established over many years. A large university may present a complex diversity of roles, explicit and implicit ways of working, values and goals compared to a single professional role or context. The school itself will have diverse roles, with some of these, such as researcher, perhaps less visible than others. Coming to understand the culture and one’s own place in it, who one is and who one may want to become, may be unclear. Gourlay, (2011:69) identified ‘confusion’ as a key issue for professionals joining university departments: ‘Perhaps one of the most notable themes arising from the data was that of *confusion* surrounding how to approach the new role in general. Interviewees report a sense of being unsure what was expected of them...’ She also identified ‘isolation’ as a key experience. New colleagues may have been used to team working with shared goals and values and reported an ‘experience of physical and professional isolation and a lack of team ethos and collaboration’ (p73).

#### ***Issues in Relation to Pedagogy in Higher Education***

Understanding the organisational structure, culture and ways of working within the new context, what is valued and how careers are developed are challenges for new colleagues (Martinez, 2008). There is also the issue of skilled professionals being ‘de-skilled’ and losing confidence when entering their new roles (Murray and Male, 2005). Documenting a case study of the induction experiences of one teacher educator, Murray (2010:202) reports: ‘...He [also] recorded the considerable tensions he experienced in making his perceived move from “expert to novice”...’ Much professional knowledge is held tacitly (Atkinson and Claxton, 2000) but learners need practice to be made explicit, so new staff will need to have the tools to both identify aspects of practice and their underpinning theories, and be able to explain and demonstrate these. Martinez (2008) noted that the need for ‘modelling’ of practice was a concern for new colleagues. For those who have been teachers there will be the expectation that teaching will be non-problematic, although their experience of teaching adults may be limited and they may have preconceptions, based on their experiences as students, of how teaching is undertaken at a university. The title ‘lecturer’ in itself suggests a didactic approach to teaching which could conflict with the new member of staff’s previous way of working.

*Issues in Relation to Research and Writing*

Many new entrants to schools of education will have little or no research experience. Kosnik (2007:25), writing about her role as a teacher educator, recalled being 'nervous about describing myself as a researcher and wondered if someone would call me a fraud.' Gourlay (2011) reported new colleagues having feelings of 'inauthenticity' about calling themselves 'academics'. Induction courses for new staff in universities are generally focused on developing approaches to teaching and not on research, an expertise that is assumed for entrants with PhDs. New colleagues joining schools of education, however, may have no academic qualifications beyond their first degree and may not have confidence in their own academic reading and writing abilities. They may have a level of ambivalence towards academic discourse derived from their professional histories. Notions of 'ivory towers' and time spent on academic work being seen as a luxury and as taking focus away from practice can lead to ambiguity around perceptions of how much new staff wish to engage with the research agenda (Gourlay, 2011).

So for new members of staff there may be issues of role complexity (Loughran, 2006; Russell and Loughran, 2007) and issues around changing identities as they moved from one professional role to another (Swennen et al, 2008). 'The actual transition from classroom teacher to teacher educator appears to be an involved process' (Ritter, 2007:6); there are differences as well as similarities in the roles and the change is complex and challenging (Ritter, 2007).

**Issues for Providers of Induction**

*Issues in Relation to the Social Context of Learning*

Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that learning in the context of the workplace setting, through initially participating peripherally and then entering more fully into a community of practice is a social process. The importance of gradual induction into the role and the roles of more experienced colleagues in the learning of new staff members is seen as crucial. In the complex contexts of current schools of education there will be a wide range of programmes and roles and much of the work may be undertaken on different campuses and in schools and other places, including international settings. New programmes and ways of working will be being developed. In some instances new colleagues will have been appointed specifically to lead new initiatives so the notion of a form of apprenticeship will be problematic. The range of ways of working and potential roles within the context may be invisible to new colleagues and ideas about what sort of identity to develop are likely to be uncertain.

Much work in this field discusses the role of communities of practice in inducting colleagues into new roles and ways of working (Russell and Loughran, 2007). Dinkelman et al (2006:131) argue that the transitional 'teacher to teacher educator' process can be supported in programmes that, among other features 'foster communities of teacher educators (both new and more experienced) who share a passion for teaching teachers'. Basing her suggestions on interviews with five new lecturers, however, Gourlay (2011) has recently highlighted what she terms 'the myth of "communities of practice"' model as put forward by Lave and Wenger (1991). Gourlay (2011:76) reports:

'These lecturers' accounts suggest that for them, the transition to lecturer was challenging and characterised at times by a degree of confusion, inauthenticity and isolation. This suggests that a 'community' should not be assumed to pre-exist in an academic department in a form that will allow novices with limited experience of advanced scholarship to learn new practices from more experienced colleagues in a relatively organic manner. This

implies a need to develop ways of sharing these less observable practices more explicitly...'

Martin and Barlow (2008) have also identified that while informal learning is often central to the induction process it can be difficult to access and be limited to particular approaches. For example Murray (2005) found in her survey of professional development for teacher educators, that much induction happened within a small teaching team which was useful and important, particularly for practical aspects at the beginning of the induction period, but which could limit the perceptions and understanding of roles within higher education.

## **Developing and Implementing a New Approach to Induction**

### **Rationale for a New Approach to Induction**

Colleagues in the School of Education, which is the setting for the work explained in this paper, identified that current induction was not meeting the needs of new colleagues, who were facing many of the problems described above. The University provided a new staff course focused on teaching, which was aimed at those new to this aspect of work. While new colleagues valued the opportunity to connect with others from different Schools, learning basic teaching techniques was not one of their identified needs. The School of Education provided each new member of staff with a mentor who was a source of information and support. However, it was difficult to get mentors and mentees together to have time to explore some of the more invisible issues of culture, perceptions of challenges to identity and anxieties about academic practice. It was decided therefore to create a new approach to induction by setting up regular group sessions for the new members of staff. These sessions could limit feelings of isolation, explore issues and develop knowledge and skills.

### **Issues to Consider when Developing the New Approach**

#### *Capability*

Martinez (2008:49), when discussing the challenge of designing an induction curriculum, highlights the expertise new members of staff bring to the role. She notes '...The joy is that academic induction can assume that participants are already experts of some sort – are smart adults capable of analysing and applying generic principles to their own knowledge context...' It was identified that the new group would not assume a deficit model but would work from the base of what colleagues could contribute to their own development and that of others.

#### *The Role of More Experienced Colleagues*

The importance of the involvement of more experienced colleagues in the induction of new colleagues is noted in a number of publications, often in relation to the value of mentors or work shadowing (Martinez, 2008; Gourlay, 2011). How this can be undertaken without limiting the learning to the influence of one person or small subject focused teaching team was an important issue for the development of the work described here. Clearly experienced staff would play a role in the group but needed to be open to a wide range of views and not to dominate the sessions. The aim was that current members of staff would be part of the group, would listen and participate but would not be 'telling people what to do'. The group was to be a genuine enquiry into experience which would be new to current members of staff as well as to new colleagues.

### *Self-Study and Reflective Practice*

Dinkelman (2003:16) suggests self-study can be a powerful means of supporting reflective practice:

'...Self-study has the potential to animate the idea of teaching as reflection, generate knowledge about promoting reflective practice, model an inquiry-based approach to pedagogy, provide opportunities for beginning teachers to reflect on learning to teach, and generate rich understandings that can be used to facilitate program change...'

Self-study has been an approach used by many teacher educators to come to understand and to develop their own practice (Bullock and Christou, 2009; Kosnik et al, 2011; Garbett and Ovens, 2012). Studying one's own practice with colleagues allows for critical reflection and for identification of similarities and differences in experience. It enables colleagues to contribute to the professional development of each other. The aim in the new induction programme was to use some form of self-study approach to enquire into, and document, new colleagues' development during their first three years in the School of Education.

The self-study group or collaborative approach to professional development allowed individuals to explore their own changing identity within the context of the others' developing identity, and 'attend to the experiences and understandings of others, bringing this thinking back to ourselves' (Latta and Buck 2007:191). In this way private development would be enhanced by public sharing within the group.

### *Narrative, Storytelling and Dialogue*

In the regular group sessions colleagues were given space to talk about their experiences, tell stories about what they were doing and then discuss these with others in the group. Bruner (1991) has argued that people understand the social world through narrative. It is how we make sense of the past, plan for the future and share our ideas with others. Narratives are the author's interpretation of experience and they are open to interpretation by the listener or reader. This enables different views to be discussed naturally, not as challenges to propositional knowledge, but as another way of seeing the social world. Carter (1993:9) explores the use of story in teaching and teacher education and notes that a story 'is a theory of something. What we tell and how we tell it is a revelation of what we believe'. Telling stories of experience enabled colleagues to articulate their understanding of their new roles. Setting stories alongside each other allowed for emerging similarities, differences and themes to emerge. Colleagues had conversations about these stories, moving into dialogue where they were involved in 'exploration and critique of the reasons and assumptions associated with their positions (inquiry)' (Haigh, 2005:8). In this way dialogue becomes a powerful context for professional learning.



### *Visual Images*

Creating visual images for reflection was a process introduced by the first author at the initial group meeting. Gauntlett suggests that this is one of many creative and visual methods that can be used for exploring identities and can also provide a starting point for thinking about issues, and communicating them to others (Gauntlett and Holzwarth, 2006). This form of representation allows for the metaphorical; the being able to express something difficult to put into words (Gauntlett, 2007). Visual images also allow colleagues to document perceptions of practice without writing. This was important as writing in an academic context was seen as an issue for some new staff from professional backgrounds. What was also important was that drawing was not a requirement but a suggestion. The drawing of 'How I see myself in my practice now' formed a key element of each session because the new staff members requested this, not because it was expected.

### **Developing the New Approach**

The staff developers therefore, wanted a needs-led form of professional development to complement the University taught course and School mentoring. This would explore role complexity and identity, and include support for research and writing because these were not included in the formal University induction programme. They were, however, aware of the pressures on new staff and the difficulty of finding 'learning spaces' (Savin-Baden, 2007) in academic life, so they were unsure whether new colleagues would be prepared or able to allocate time to a voluntary group. Small group discussion might be of value for issues involving identity and values, and 'New dialogic spaces could be beneficial for new lecturers in general, promoting a more honest interaction with the development process' (Gourlay, 2011:76). The Head of School allocated time in new colleague's timetables for participation in this group which gave that opportunity to engage with the process.

### **Implementing the New Approach**

#### *Group Participants*

Four colleagues who were new to working in a higher education setting were participants in this new approach to induction. One participant came from a further education college and had experience of working with students across a range of health and early years programmes. Her background was in the health service. A second colleague had prior experience of working in multi-disciplinary settings with young children and families. A third member of the group had extensive experience as a teacher in primary schools, while the fourth participant was an experienced teacher who had recently worked in an advisory capacity in relation to her curricula subject expertise. Together, they formed what Martinez (2008), in her study of new teacher educators, describes as a very diverse group. This 'diversity' presents one of the challenges of developing appropriate induction programmes (Murray, 2010).

The first author, a very experienced teacher educator, had contributed to the collaborative development of guidelines for the induction of members of staff newly appointed as lecturers in Initial Teacher Education in England (Boyd et al, 2007). Other established members of staff within the School of Education attended sessions, one on a frequent and others on an occasional basis. The second author, a research fellow, contributed to a number of the sessions and took part in the evaluation. The focus in this paper is on the ways in which a self-study group of four new

teacher educators, supported by three experienced colleagues, enhanced the existing institutional induction process.

*Induction Group Sessions*

The group first met at the beginning of the academic year and thereafter the new staff determined the frequency of the meetings and topics that were discussed. The meetings provided an opportunity for participants to discuss and explore issues raised by new members of staff and the process was designed to build trust so that all members could share their ideas, anxieties, difficulties and achievements. Table 1 shows the format of each session and the usual sequence of activities.

	<b>Sequence of activities</b>
1	Informal conversations over refreshments
2	Dialogue and storytelling on topics raised by each participant Identification of specific needs raised by participants and discussion of ways in which these could be met
3	Drawing to explore and document participants' perceptions of their current situation
4	Reflective discussion based on participants' drawings
5	Close-down of the session including scheduling the next session

**Table 1: Session format showing sequence of activities**

*Induction Group Milestones*

Some of the main milestones for the first four years of the group are highlighted in the timeline shown in Table 2. These milestones include: the start of the sequence of group meetings; collaborative preparation of presentations for professional development sessions held within the School of Education, a University-wide conference, and two international conferences; and collaborative writing of a paper published in the proceedings of one of the international conferences.

Month	Milestone
<b>ACADEMIC YEAR 1 (2008-2009)</b>	
September	Regular induction group sessions begin. Fifteen meetings took place before the evaluation of Year 1 of the programme was carried out in June. Issues covered in the sessions included: 'What do I need to know?', marking and modelling.
May	Presentation to colleagues within the School of Education during a professional development session.
May	Presentation at the University-wide Annual Learning and Teaching Conference.
June	Evaluation of Year 1 of the programme using an adaptation of the Project Reflection Workshop (Church Urban Fund, 2006).
June	Discussion about an abstract for the International Professional Development Association (IPDA) Conference.
<b>ACADEMIC YEAR 2 (2009-2010)</b>	
September	Submission of proposal for the Self-Study Conference in August 2010 (proposal accepted November 2009).
October	Individual and collaborative peer review of proposals for the Self-Study Conference.
October	Collaborative preparation of presentation for the IPDA Conference in November 2009.
November	Presentation to colleagues within the School of Education during a professional development session.
November	Presentation at an international conference. Conference: IPDA Annual Conference: Tomorrow's Professionals: balancing the demands of policy and practice. Presentation: In at the deep end? Reflections on the professional journey of a group of early academics in their first year.
January	Submission of first draft of paper for the Self-Study Conference following collaborative writing.
March	Submission of final paper for the Self-Study Conference following collaborative re-drafting using review feedback.
August	Presentation at an international conference and publication of the paper in the conference proceedings (Chivers et al, 2010). Conference: Eighth International Conference on Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices <i>Navigating the Public and Private: Negotiating the Diverse Landscape of Teacher Education</i> . Presentation: Enhancing the Induction Process of New Teacher Educators through a Self-Study Group.
<b>ACADEMIC YEAR 3 (2010-2011)</b>	
February	Meeting for group participants to: share feedback from the Conference Presentation; consider progress towards a journal article; discuss 'where we are now'; and think about the impact of

Month	Milestone
	the project on members' subsequent work.
<b>ACADEMIC YEAR 4 (2011-2012)</b>	
December	Invitation for group participants to independently reflect on the longer term impact of the group and its activities on their professional development, and to provide suggestions for future practice.
January	Meeting for members of the 'new academic' group and members of academic staff who had joined the School of Education more recently. Issues explored during one-to-one conversations and group discussions included: experiences as 'early academics'; what was helpful for induction; and what members of the group would have liked for induction or would like now.

**Table 2: Induction group milestones over four academic years**

## Research Methods

The purpose of the research was to examine the efficacy of a self-study group as part of an induction process. It explored the developing professional identity of the teacher educators, the role of the group and the effects of collecting visual research data during several of the group sessions. In addition to collecting data as visual images prepared individually by new members of staff, data were also collected as individual reflective accounts recorded at selected time points, and as group members' reflections. These reflections were documented during an evaluation workshop carried out on a single occasion during the first year. Additional independent reflections were collected from participants via email during the fourth year.

### Visual Images

Data were collected in the form of visual images which participants drew in sessions to represent their current perceptions of their experiences and role. These drawings were an important means of self-expression, which also provided a clear way of looking at individual development when images were ordered chronologically; themes were then identified within the group when these sequences of images were laid beside each other.

### Reflective Accounts

At the end of the year the new teacher educators prepared a reflective account of their experiences of the group and their developing professional identity.

### **Project Reflection Workshop**

A Project Reflection Workshop (Church Urban Fund, 2006), a project evaluation and assessment tool, was adapted and used as a means of evaluating the project towards the end of the first academic year. This workshop, developed with the help of (new economics foundation), is based on a tool designed for project self-evaluation. The approach supported the aim of representing the views of different participants, and of complexity more generally. The workshop was attended by new members of staff, the teacher educator who led the induction programme, a second experienced teacher educator and the research fellow. Participants at the workshop agreed that they would consider their experience of the induction programme during the academic year between September and May.

In the first part of the workshop participants reflected on their experience of the programme and identified their perceived high points and low points. Brief descriptions of each point were documented. Participants compared and discussed the perceived high points and low points in relation to the time-line. Participants worked in a group at the end of this part of the workshop. They considered some of the changes that had resulted (or might result) from the programme and identified some of the learning that had taken place.

Finally, in the second part of the workshop participants had a further group discussion. They identified some goals they would like to achieve in the future and considered the actions that would be needed in order to meet these goals.

### **Reflections on the Longer Term Impact of the Group and Suggestions for Future Practice**

The longer term impact of the group and suggestions for future practice were explored during Year 4, when each of the four new colleagues was invited to respond via email to the following three questions:

1. What part has the early academic group and its activities played in your professional development?
2. Can you identify any specific examples of the impact of the process?
3. What changes, if any, would you suggest if the process was repeated?

### **Research Findings: Reflecting on the New Approach to Induction**

The main research findings that relate to the role of the induction group are presented in this paper as extracts from the participants' reflective accounts, which include their views on the value of using drawing in sessions; and as their responses to questions about the longer term impact of the group and suggestions for future practice collected in Year 4. Group members' participation in the Project Reflection Workshop contributed towards the development of the individual narratives and the feedback collected during the workshop itself is not included here. The full narratives are available (Chivers et al, 2010).

**Findings: Reflective Accounts**

The reflective accounts prepared by the new members of staff during 2009-2010 reveal a number of shared themes. Table 3 shows some extracts from the accounts, which illustrate the participants' perceptions of the role of the group and the visual method.

<p><b>The self-study induction group was...</b></p> <p><i>Extracts from Leo's narrative</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a tentative process that encouraged us to reflect on how we could <i>be</i></li> <li>- the process has provided a safe place for reflection, for sharing and constructing new forms of knowledge, as a way to grow our <i>selves</i> as academics</li> </ul> <p><i>Extracts from Chris's narrative</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- enabling environment</li> <li>- a sense of community developed</li> <li>- more of a collaborative exploration of topics identified by members with the needs of the new academics at the centre</li> <li>- felt like a safe place to [discuss issues or voice concerns]</li> </ul> <p><i>Extracts from Libby's narrative</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- sessions had an unstructured approach, which meant that we lead the direction that each session took</li> <li>- safe environment</li> </ul> <p><i>Extracts from Dianne's narrative</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the process has been invaluable in many ways</li> <li>- an invaluable learning community</li> <li>- an unknown road</li> </ul>
<p><b>The self-study induction group and/or the visual method and discussion of the pictures...</b></p> <p><i>Extracts from Leo's narrative</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- facilitated a shared awareness and confidence</li> <li>- enabled us to see through each other's eyes. We were able to empathise with colleagues from diverse professional backgrounds and to realise that we were not alone in our struggles and insecurities</li> <li>- able to understand that other new colleagues also felt this lack of confidence and that I was not alone</li> <li>- enabled a significant growth in my self-awareness</li> </ul> <p><i>Extracts from Chris's narrative</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- encouraged reflection and analysis of our feelings and thoughts</li> <li>- enabled and supported the development and exploration of a complex new role, professional identity and potential</li> <li>- affirmed my practice which helped me to trust myself and my decisions. This, in turn, increased my confidence in my ability to be successful in this role and</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- develop my identity as an academic</li><li>- enabled less conscious and less rational aspects of development to be considered</li><li>- eased a transition towards a new identity as an academic</li><li>- given me the professional confidence to [continue to develop more new initiatives]</li></ul> <p><b><i>Extracts from Libby's narrative</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- given the space and forum to openly express our feelings and concerns about our new roles</li><li>- helped us to develop trust both in each other and the senior members of staff who were leading it</li><li>- provided a very clear path of development and growth in confidence and in my identity</li><li>- development of my confidence</li><li>- helped me to reflect on key events</li></ul> <p><b><i>Extracts from Dianne's narrative</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- developed a trusting relationship, allowing any one of us to share concerns and high points</li><li>- enabled discussion around a number of themes which were new to me</li><li>- encouraged to reflect on my developing role and to consider the way forward</li><li>- increase my professional confidence</li><li>- enabled me to become more effective</li><li>- allowed to find my own identity and develop my own professional needs</li></ul>
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**Table 3: Extracts from the reflective accounts illustrating participants' perceptions of the role of the group and the visual method**

The four narratives include references to some of the issues for induction discussed earlier in this paper. For example, all participants identified confidence and self efficacy as being developed by the process. These went hand in hand with an increased awareness of participants' changing identities. Table 4 shows some extracts from the narratives that are relevant to the issues for induction described earlier in this paper and Table 5 includes some of the words used most frequently by the new members of staff to describe attributes or characteristics and activities and examples of the ways they are used.

<p><b><i>Issues in relation to identity and values</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In short, we came to understand we were ‘all in the same boat’. This notion was immensely supportive for new staff struggling to come to terms with self perceptions of themselves as imposter-academics.</li> <li>- This, in turn, increased my confidence in my ability to be successful in this role and develop my identity as an academic.</li> <li>- The process and elements of the early academic group described here have eased a transition towards a new identity as an academic.</li> <li>- I feel I have been ‘inducted’ but allowed to find my own identity and develop my own professional needs.</li> <li>- We were never made to feel we were being taught or that anyone had the answers; it was more of a collaborative exploration of topics identified by members with the needs of the new academics at the centre.</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Issues in relation to research and writing</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I have been able to lead on new internal and external business-facing initiatives as well as teaching, researching and studying.</li> <li>- The process has also meant we have become immersed in research and presenting at conferences.</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Issues in relation to pedagogy in higher education</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- My role has evolved and the self-study group has enabled discussion around a number of themes which were new to me - for example: how do I support students who are not intending to become teachers or how do I encourage learners to take an active part in group sessions?</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Issues in relation to the social context of learning</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The power of this shared understanding cannot be under-estimated as I now look back on this aspect as being one of the key opportunities or spaces for reflection given to me that helped me to be less alone.</li> <li>- Developing a learning community has always featured in my teaching, whether it be with young children or adults. The self-study group has been an invaluable learning community for me.</li> </ul>

**Table 4: Extracts from the reflective accounts illustrating participants’ perceptions of some of the issues for induction**



<i>Attributes/characteristics and activities (frequency of use)</i>	<i>Examples of use</i>
Confident, confidence, self-confidence (12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- lack of confidence</li> <li>- increased my confidence</li> <li>- professional confidence</li> <li>- development and growth in confidence</li> </ul>
Develop, developed, development, developing (22)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- professional development</li> <li>- a sense of community developed</li> <li>- development and exploration</li> <li>- development of friendships</li> </ul>
Enabled, enabling (8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- enabled us to see</li> <li>- enabled a significant growth</li> <li>- enabling environment</li> <li>- enabled and supported</li> </ul>
Help, helped, helpful (11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- help other people</li> <li>- helpful to discuss</li> <li>- helped me to trust myself</li> <li>- helped me to develop</li> </ul>
Identity (10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- professional identity and potential</li> <li>- identity as an academic</li> <li>- developing identity</li> <li>- find my own identity</li> </ul>
Learn, learners, learning (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- comforted to learn</li> <li>- learn very quickly</li> <li>- encourage learners</li> <li>- invaluable learning community</li> </ul>
Reflect(s), reflecting, reflection (11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reflecting together</li> <li>- spaces for reflection</li> <li>- safe place for reflection</li> <li>- encouraged reflection and analysis</li> <li>- reflecting on professional development</li> </ul>
Share, shared, sharing (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- shared understanding</li> <li>- shared awareness and confidence</li> <li>- fears were largely shared</li> <li>- sharing and constructing</li> </ul>
Support, supported, supportive, supporting (11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- supportive for new staff</li> <li>- supporting the transition</li> <li>- support of colleagues</li> <li>- support, supervision and guidance</li> </ul>
Understand, understanding (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- able to understand</li> <li>- clearer understanding</li> <li>- constructing our understanding</li> </ul>

<i>Attributes/characteristics and activities (frequency of use)</i>	<i>Examples of use</i>
	– understanding of my role

**Table 5: Examples of attributes or characteristics and activities referred to most frequently in participants’ reflective accounts and some examples of their use**

**Findings: Reflections on the Longer Term Impact of the Group and Suggestions for Future Practice**

Table 6 shows the participants' responses to the questions about the role of the group and its activities in relation to their professional development and suggestions for future practice.

<i>Code</i>	<i>Response</i>
<b>Question 1. What part has the early academic group and its activities played in your professional development?</b>	
A	Essential in hindsight for dealing with uncertainty issues, namely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Imposter Phenomenon</li> <li>· Containment</li> <li>· Co-construction of new professional identity &amp; defining new areas of practice, knowledge &amp; self awareness within a complex, unknown working environment/institution.</li> </ul>
B	It gave me confidence in my own ability in relation to decision making and partnership working through affirming my decisions and choices and signposting me to where to go for support when needed. It was also supportive to feel part of a group of new academics rather than the only new one.
C	It helped me to feel safe enough to voice concerns/fears/worries in the first year of a big career change. It also helped me to develop friendships with people I would probably otherwise not have got to know. The chance to reflect and draw pictures also helped me begin to develop a sense of direction and develop identity as a new academic and early researcher.
D	The early academic group provided a smooth transition from teaching in Primary School to teaching in Higher Education. Although I had been at the university for a year prior to this, the group allowed me to share the experiences of others who were, for the most part, feeling confused about similar issues. The sessions supported us in moving from being unsure to confident.
<b>Question 2. Can you identify any specific examples of the impact of the process?</b>	
A	Techniques for charting development and sharing implicit knowledge through art-based inquiry processes led me to confidence. In becoming confident I could see that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I was developing &amp; that some achievements were being made!</li> </ul>

<i>Code</i>	<i>Response</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- That uncertainty and messiness was ok – it was part of the process</li> <li>- That through dialogue with other new colleagues we were all able to co-construct ways forward for ourselves and each other</li> </ul>
B	Clarification on processes and getting the 'OK' to go ahead on my own initiative was useful. Developing my own professional identity was useful as was the use of drawings to assist with this. The conference presentation developed confidence and an early introduction to presentation and writing techniques supported development in this area.
C	The drawing of pictures (which I found very hard to do without also adding words), initially helped me sort out my feelings in the new role. It also helped me realise that I was not alone in these feelings. Later, these drawings and meetings helped me to stand back and reflect on the exciting developments that came out of my opportunities to do some small scale research...and to recognise my development and growth as an academic and new researcher.
D	The aspects which were probably most important in my professional development were those of the group introduction to writing and the understanding that yes, we all have something relevant to contribute, and similarly, the group support when presenting at a conference for the first time. I really appreciated the drawing sessions too. This was a useful way of putting down on paper what your thoughts were and gave the group much to discuss.
<b>Question 3. What changes, if any, would you suggest if the process was repeated?</b>	
A	Less of a smorgasbord of approaches offered – more of a clearer rationale for the inquiry techniques given so that participants could be clear on why the whole traditional ‘induction’ process is complemented, (nay, bettered!) by this innovative, creative approach. After all, perhaps the key learning about the process is that it’s about learning.
B	I think the changes would need to be led by the new academics themselves as the value of the process in my opinion was that it was needs led and all new academics would have different needs. Different facilitators would also provide a different experience and would need to develop the process in a way in which they feel comfortable. Supporting and containing a group such as this is complicated and requires facilitators who are open to hearing the difficulties that new academics may experience as well as encouraging them to become resilient and knowledgeable through reflecting on their experiences.
C	Maybe less gap between the process and being asked to reflect on it. Some more practical aspects of induction, running alongside this rather different approach would also have been helpful.
D	The only changes I would suggest (and they are not really changes) would be:

<i>Code</i>	<i>Response</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· to introduce 'check-in' points, perhaps twice-yearly for the following 2 years</li> <li>· to ensure that future staff have the same quality experience that we had.</li> </ul> <p>We were extremely lucky to have the fairly large number of new staff which ensured we met regularly and had lots to share. This is difficult to maintain when one member of staff joins at the beginning of Semester B.</p>

**Table 6: Participants' reflections on the longer term impact of the group and suggestions for future practice**

One of the participants described it as '*A super experience which none of us wanted to end.*'

Some of the new teacher educators' reflections on the role of the self-study group and the visual method set out in the findings section are referred to again in the discussion section in the context of reports in the literature. For example, the acknowledgement of a sense of community within the group and the contribution of the group to their developing confidence and self-efficacy in their new role.

## **Discussion**

### **The New Approach to Induction**

There is no requisite format for the development of teacher educators (Shagrir, 2010) and the participant needs-led approach to teacher educator induction reported in this paper was developed in response to a perceived gap in the provision within a UK University School of Education. The findings from the research on this personalised approach contribute to the research already available 'on the working lives and identities of teacher educators and the provision made for their professional learning in higher education' (Murray and Kosnik, 2011:245). Murray and Kosnik emphasise the importance of such research for understanding the complexity of the role of teacher educators as an essential component of teacher education.

This approach described here provided each participant with a unique opportunity for professional learning with a 'community of colleagues' (Shagrir, 2010:56); both staff members new to the higher education setting and those with more experience of university-based teacher education. The new members of staff identified some helpful aspects of the role of the self-study group and the visual method in their reflective narrative accounts of their experiences of the group. For example, the participants perceived that the group supported openness and risk taking which would not have happened without the trust that had been built up through the self-study group process. Although the participants' reflections and visual representations confirmed their experience of the challenging nature of the transition into higher education reported by Gourlay (2011), collaborative group support and the space provided to reflect were also key themes. Their recognition of the role of the group as a community suggested that it included one of the supportive elements of a transitional programme suggested by Dinkelman et al (2006). In addition to this sense of 'community', participants appreciated the 'safe' environment, both features of a self-study group recognised by doctoral students who wanted to become teacher educators (Kosnik et al, 2011).

### Issues for New Colleagues

The four narratives include references to some of the issues for induction discussed earlier in this paper. For example, all participants identified confidence and self efficacy as being developed by the process. These went hand in hand with an increased awareness of participants' changing identities. These issues were also highlighted in the participants' reflections of the longer term impact of the group.

Reflecting on the identity of teacher educators, Dinkelman (2011:309) notes that in common with other types of identity:

'...They are multiple, fluid, always developing, shaped by a broad range of sociocultural power relationships, strongly influenced by any number of relevant contexts and relational. Teacher educator identities reflect an unstable and ever-shifting weave of personal and professional phenomena. They are both claimed by teacher educators and given to them via the roles and institutions that frame the profession. In a word, teacher educator identity is complex.'

Dinkelman (2011:310) found that taking part in a 'teacher education self-study community provided a more focused and sustained stance towards my own developing teacher educator identity...than might otherwise have been the case'. He continued, noting the role played by 'numerous rich conversations about the profession' arising within the group.

In the current study, the new colleagues' reports of increasing confidence were evidenced by their activities within the group, for example, by group presentations to colleagues within the School, at a University conference, and at international conferences. This gradual progression of activities involving research and dissemination is described by Harrison and McKeon (2010) in their study of 'turning point' research and scholarship experiences for new teacher educators. Reporting findings from their study of three cases, rather than a group approach, Harrison and McKeon (2010:29) suggest:

'...In effect, they were able to engage in 'low risk' activities in relation to both research and scholarly activities, feeling their way as new academics, with varying levels of professional support from their academic colleagues, and gaining confidence in their developing scholarly and research skills...'

This formed an important component of the approach reported in this paper, although such activities were shared by all members of the group. Harrison and McKeon (2010:32) acknowledge the importance of colleagues' support for new members of staff, 'helping to bridge the boundary between the previous and new workplaces in relation to research and scholarship as well as pedagogical activities.' They suggest that this process of integrating their developing understanding of research and scholarly activity with their developing knowledge of pedagogy in the new setting is ongoing for new members of staff. Loughran (2011) highlights the importance of moving from solely teaching, to teaching and research as part of academic work, for developing teacher educator identity, suggesting that this involves moving beyond seeing teaching as simply doing. In some settings, there is a requirement, ideally, for teacher educators to be both practitioners *and* academics, producing new knowledge through taking part in research (Murray et al, 2011).

## Research Methods

The purpose of the research reported in this paper was to examine the efficacy of the self-study group as part of an induction process; exploring the developing professional identity of the teacher educators, the role of the group and the effects of collecting visual research data. The outcomes of this process, described above, were new staff's increased confidence to work in the context of complexity, and the ability to embrace their changing identities including those of researcher and writer. Although these outcomes were experienced by all four members of the group, the individual stories illustrate the uniqueness of their experiences of the influence of the self-study group.

One feature of the research methods that is of particular interest is the impact of using visual representations of feelings and experience, a feature that all four participants reflected on during the longer term follow-up of the group (Table 6). The value of using images as a means of self expression was important to all participants; this was seen as significant for revealing individual and collective insights. This impact was not anticipated by either the experienced staff or the new staff and is an issue for further research within the School.

## Strengths and Challenges

Many of the strengths and challenges of this approach to induction for beginning teacher educators have already been identified in this paper and are clearly documented in the participants' reflections. Specific changes such as providing greater clarity about the rationale for the approach could be easily implemented in future programmes, drawing on the experience of this exploratory study. Although some activities did continue longer term for this first group, more regular "check-in" points could be included for future ones, providing individualised academic induction support over three years (Boyd et al, 2011). However, the transition process from classroom teacher (or other professional field) to teacher educator is not linear (Wood and Borg, 2010) and similarly the pathway of a future group would depend, as in this case, on the unique identities and values of the early academics themselves. This feature of the group highlights one of the challenges, noted earlier in this paper; the availability of committed teacher educators with sufficient expertise to be open to this approach and not to direct the process. This is aligned with the 'leading from behind' approach to collaborative working often used within the School (Dickerson et al, 2011:38).

## Implications for Induction Practice

### Implications for the Induction of New Teacher Educators

The approach to induction of teacher educators described in this paper offers one way of meeting the challenge identified by Boyd et al (2011:33):

'The challenge for induction of teacher educators appears to be not to devise set induction programmes that will equip them with a 'bag of tricks' full of generic pedagogical and research skills for higher education work. Rather, they should have the time, space, support and opportunities to reflect on and analyse their emerging practice as teacher educators and the questions, issues and dilemmas it raises...'

This study offers such an approach. It suggests the importance of participant needs-led induction that is about exploring complexity and identity, recognising (Butt and Burr, 2004:3) that '....if you want to help people to change, you must first understand the construction they are

placing on their world, the theories they hold, and the questions they are asking.' Perhaps what was achieved was partly due to the fact that the *process* rather than the quantifiable task of induction was attended to by the leaders of the group.

Learning to work in a complex organisation involves more than gaining information about systems and processes, many of which need to be created to meet changing situations. The self-study group process to induction described in this paper that involved using visual representations as a means of self expression enabled each of the new colleagues to engage effectively in their new context, developing confidence in their identity as a professional, and with the ability to undertake and create new roles and ways of working. Such a process can help facilitate the development of the professionals needed to work in the dynamic context of the university of today. Indeed, it is likely to have implications for a range of contexts, as Swennen et al (2010) conclude that the research on early teacher educators suggests that they experience similar challenges and difficulties irrespective of the national or organisational setting in which they work.

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