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Career orientations and career cultures: individual and organisational approaches to beginning teachers' careers

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Despite the very large literature on teacher careers from an individual perspective, there is relatively little that links the perspectives of teachers themselves to how schools as organisations approach careers. The aim of this paper is, first, to outline how teachers' orientations towards careers change across three dimensions, and, second, to examine how schools as organisations deal with career, developing a model of organisational responses, including developing a concept of 'career culture', derived from an analysis of interviews regarding the first three years of teaching conducted with senior leaders and second year teachers themselves. By considering the fit between individuals' career orientations and school career cultures, the paper surfaces both the fluid nature of these orientations and the subsequent potential instability of the fit.

Keywords: teacher career, school culture, early career teachers

Introduction

There is a very large literature on teacher careers from an individual perspective. But in contrast, there is relatively little that links the perspectives of teachers themselves to how schools as organisations approach careers. The aims of this paper are to outline teachers' orientations towards careers in their first three years in the profession and, second, to examine how schools as organisations deal with career, developing a model of organisational responses. The paper is located in relation to key work on teacher careers from the perspective of the teacher supplemented by conceptualisations from the wider Human Resources literature especially Hall's (2002) 'protean career', alongside the limited work of relevance in both the education and HR fields on organisational responses to career. Drawing on an analysis of data principally from 49 case studies of teachers interviews in their NQT year and again in the second and then third years of teaching alongside their senior leaders and mentors, the paper examines how teachers' orientations towards careers change across three dimensions – promotion orientation, orientation towards staying in the profession and work/life orientation. It then examines how schools as organisations deal with career, developing a model of organisational responses, utilising the concept of 'career culture'.

The paper concludes with a consideration of the fit between individuals' career orientations and school career cultures, surfacing both the fluid nature of these orientations and the subsequent potential instability of the fit.

Teachers' careers: reviewing the literature

Maclean (1992, p.15) argues that for sociologists the term *career* "implies a long term commitment on the part of a person to obtaining promotion, through the status hierarchy that exists in their occupation, according to some time schedule". He contrasts this with occupations which are "relatively continuous patterns of activities that provide workers with a livelihood and define their general social status". In relation to schools, Day and Gu (2010, p.43-45) argue persuasively that 'career' is too limited in its focus so prefer to discuss teachers' "life phases", since "teacher career" as a concept "takes us away from the everyday personal and professional moral purposes of teaching, which feature core characteristics of many teachers' lives" (p44). This terminology helps make explicit the interactions between work and other aspects of teachers' lives, which are important. Whilst I have used I use the more familiar term 'career' in this paper, the importance of

the lives of teachers beyond schools is considered in relation to one of three career dimensions - the 'work/life orientation'.

There are essentially two key areas of literature of relevance here. The first, and largest, is focussed on the teacher's own experience of career as a teacher, drawing on the seminal early work of Huberman (1995) developed in a UK context by Sikes, Measor and Woods (1985) and more recently Day and colleagues (Day *et al* 2006; Day and Gu 2007) and Hobson and colleagues (Ashby *et al* 2008, Tracey *et al* 2008, Homer *et al* 2009). Many of these studies attempt to distinguish typical career stages. Day *et al* (2006) note that Huberman and Sikes' work suggest five career phases:

- (1) Launching a career
- (2) Stabilization
- (3) New challenges, new concerns
- (4) Reaching a professional plateau
- (5) The final phase (p174)

The work of Day *et al.* develops this categorisation. Day and Gu (2007) distinguish what they call "Professional life phase 0–3 years" as a period during which the key learning that takes place that "builds identity and classroom competence", from the "Professional life phase 4-7 years" where "Promotion and additional responsibilities had now begun to play a significant role in teachers' motivation, commitment, and sense of effectiveness" (p436).

From this individual perspective, the importance of the school lies in its influence on individual teachers' careers. For example, Day and Gu (2007) argue that, along with personal attributes both in relation to teaching (e.g. sense of professional identity, self-efficacy, career aspirations) and beyond, the school is important in that different "levels of support available within the workplace, create particular conditions for their professional learning and development and lead to variations in their concerns and needs at different critical moments or phases of their professional and personal lives" (p. 427).

A related area of research centres on career orientations, some of which relates directly to teaching. Moore Johnson and colleagues' work (Moore Johnson, 2004) with 50 early career teachers in Massachusetts between 1999 and 2003 categorises early career teachers as those settled on a career in teachers, *explorers* testing out career options and *contributors* aiming to make a short term but significant contribution to teaching. This aligns somewhat with Watt and Richardson's (2008) analysis of a cohort of 510 Australian early career teachers as *highly engaged persisters* - aiming for a long term career in teaching - *highly engaged switchers* - focussed on a short term but committed career in schools similar to Moore-Johnson's contributors and *disengaged switchers* uncommitted to teaching, and looking to leave the profession. In the UK, Smethem's (2007) work develops a three-fold categorisation of beginning teachers' career perspectives as *career teacher* - "those who are committed to teaching as a long-term, permanent career with ambitions for remunerated promotion", *portfolio teacher* - who saw "teaching as a temporary measure or actively considered leaving teaching and *classroom teacher* "those content to remain in the classroom with pupils" (Smethem 2007, p.470). Beyond this, there is a much richer literature from the broader human resources and wider careers field, within which scholars have traced a change over recent years in career orientations. Hall's (2002) concept of the *protean career* is particularly relevant. From this perspective, the increased atomisation and individuation apparent in postmodern societies has manifested itself in relation to careers as a focus

on the individual rather than the organisation being responsible for career development. Such a career is labelled protean "because it is characterised by frequent change and self-direction driven by individual needs" (Park and Rothwell 2009, p.388). This conception has some parallels with Smethem's (2007) portfolio teacher categorisation and may be related to the increased expectation of autonomy amongst teachers such as the identification in recent times of 'teacher leaders' providing leadership throughout the organisation (Frost and Durant, 2002; Frost, 2012). Park and Rothwell found that individuals with a greater 'sense of calling' tended towards protean careers, and provided some evidence that organisational learning climates can positively influence the career development of individuals pursuing protean careers.

The protean career concept is not without its critics, for example Baruch (2006) argues that the idea that all careers are becoming increasingly protean is an overstatement, and in fact 'traditional', organisation-directed, more ordered careers have not been completely supplanted. Nevertheless, the protean career concept is important in relation to schools for three main reasons. Firstly, given that schools are relatively small organisations, teachers in many countries have always moved between schools, despite being employed by local districts or authorities in many cases. Secondly, in the specific context of this paper, as English schools have become more autonomous since the 1988 Education Reform Act, and as increasing numbers move beyond local authority auspices altogether to become academies (schools overseen directly by central government), the last vestiges of control that local authorities may have had in organising teachers' careers within a district have all but disappeared. Finally, as I identify in this paper, senior leaders are themselves increasingly detecting that teachers joining the profession are showing signs of wishing to take individual control of their careers and expecting schools to support them.

The second key area of research concerns organisational approaches to careers. Within the wider HR field, there is a small literature concerned with "organisational career management". This field tends to focus on explicit strategies and policies that organisations utilise, as Orpen (1994 p.28) notes: "The term 'organizational career management' is usually employed to cover the various policies and practices, deliberately established by organizations, to improve the career effectiveness of their employees". Orpen distinguished three inter-related factors - career management policies, employee career development support and career information provision - that were positively related to a set of outcomes defined by Orpen as 'career effectiveness' with impacts greater "for the experiential aspects (i.e. how well the subjects felt they had performed, how satisfied they were with their careers) being greater than those for the external activities of salary growth and promotions received." (Orpen 1994 p.33).

A different area of research focussed on organisational approaches concerns broader work place learning. In recent years, this literature has concentrated on the ways in which organisations can influence learning via concepts such as Billett's (2001) workplace "affordances" for learning, Eraut's (2007) "learning factors" and "context factors" and Fuller and Unwin's (2003) "expansive/restrictive learning environments". Much of this work does not address career directly. However, Fuller and Unwin's expansive-restrictive continuum does make explicit reference to career in relation to apprentices, with one of the characteristics of an expansive learning environment conceived as a "post-apprenticeship vision" of "progression for career" as opposed to the restrictive vision which is "static for job". (Fuller and Unwin 2003 p.411). They go on to note that one of "three aspects of the expansive approach to apprenticeship [that] are particularly likely to contribute to personal development" is "the ability to envisage

and experience long trajectories and careers" (p417). More recent work (Fuller *et al.* 2007) looks beyond apprentices into a range of different sectors, and does provide more detail on how organisations can deal with career; for example, one organisation is described by a respondent as a "long lasting career driven company" in which people's careers are seen as the driving force" (Fuller *et al.* 2007 p713), revealing an explicitly career-related aspect of the culture of the organisation, which is of central importance to this paper as it considers schools' approaches to career. There is of course also a large literature on schools' support for early career teachers' careers as developing classroom practitioners, in relation particularly to mentoring (Cameron, Lovett & Berger, 2007; Day and Gu, 2007; Hobson and Ashby, 2012).

Methodology - a brief outline

The NQT QIS (Newly Qualified Teacher Quality Improvement Study) was a 4 year, England-wide longitudinal, combined methods study of both senior leadership team (SLT) and early career teachers' (ECTs') views of key issues in the first three years of teaching. The first two phases of the study focussed on entry into the NQT year and the NQT year itself; the third phase was focused on the transitional step-up from the NQT year into the second year of teachers' professional lives, as perceived by senior leaders (SLs), second year teachers and their previous NQT mentors. The specific foci were the inter-related areas of: perceptions of teacher quality and performance; professional development and support; career development; and progression from the NQT year/retention in second and third year teachers. Data utilised in this paper draw primarily from three sets of 49 school case study visits (23 secondaries, 21 primaries, 4 special schools and 2 independent schools) focussing in turn on the first, second and third year of teaching, undertaken between Spring 2008 and Spring 2010. The Case Studies included interviews with the early career teachers, their mentor and a senior leader in each of the first two years and teachers, their line managers and a senior leader in the third year. This paper also makes use of a survey of 298 third year teachers from 133 secondary, 156 primary, 4 special and 5 independent schools.

Findings

Individual career orientations

If one takes a broad view of career (occupation in Maclean's (1992) terms), it comprises a number of interrelated dimensions, of which promotion is only one. In the NQTQIS project, data gathering focussed on two such dimensions: orientation towards teaching as a career and orientation towards promotion and taking additional responsibility. As the case study data in relation to the third year of teaching was analysed, a third dimension - work/life prioritisation - emerged. In this section, I discuss these three aspects in turn.

Orientation towards teaching as a career

In each of the first three years, ECTs were asked about their intentions in relation to staying in or leaving teaching. In the first year many teachers were unsure about whether to stay or leave, although a significant minority intended to stay in teaching for the long term, and a very small minority intended to leave. The vast majority of the NQTs with whom we spoke intended to stay in teaching for at least the next three to five years. For many – 18 of the 49 NQTs we spoke to in all sectors – teaching was seen as a long term career, and six used the term "career for life". For the rest, teaching was something they planned to stay in for the foreseeable future (at least ten more teachers) or at least for the time being (most of the rest).

Only two (both primary teachers) felt they were likely to leave teaching. One of these was feeling the pressure of working in a school with significant levels of deprivation, the other felt underpaid compared with comparable professions (this issue was not mentioned by other NQTs):

I don't think I'll stay in teaching - it's too hard, I waste too much of the holidays catching up on my sleep. And I'd like to see a bit of the world sometime... There's a big difference in pay between teachers and doctors like my dad; doctors should get more but the difference is huge! (secondary NQT)

There were seven others who felt they may leave, to travel (two NQTs), to change career (three) to teach abroad (one), or to escape the pressure (one, working in an independent school).

The picture had not changed significantly by the time of their second year of teaching. Only a small minority intended to leave the profession for the 'pull' of fresh challenges, to teach abroad or - in two cases - the 'push' of lower job satisfaction due to pressures of the job, associated in the wider literature on teacher careers with decisions to leave teaching (De Nobile & McCormick, 2008; DeAngelis & Presley, 2011).

By the third year, as indicated in Table 1 below, there had been a polarisation – very few were undecided; a few wanted to leave, but most saw teaching as a long term career. The relatively low proportion intending to leave in each of the three years seems potentially out of line with one of the most often quoted claims that "of those who become teachers [in England] about 40 per cent are no longer teaching five years later" (Kyriacou 2005, cited in Ashby *et al.* 2008 p.68). It is beyond the brief of this article, but within the NQTQIS study we noted a high proportion of schools with a focus on support and development, associated with positive early career experiences and therefore retention, by numerous previous studies (for example Ashby *et al.* 2008, Day and Gu 2010, Ingersoll 2001).

Table 1: Future intentions in relation to staying or leaving teaching - comparing the first and third years (case study data - frequency)

Intention	NQT Year	Third Year
Long term or 'for life'	24 (48%)	32 (70%)
Short/Medium term	24 (48%)	7 (15%)
Likely to leave	2 (4%)	7 (15%)

Table 1 appears to show that views between the NQT year and the third year harden, with a majority of those who were still teaching committing to the profession in the longer term, whereas a significant minority intended to leave the profession. This increased commitment to teaching occurred for a number of reasons. Jo, a primary teacher, was one of those who intended to leave the profession in her first year, finding the workload difficult to manage and feeling unsupported by the school, noting she "would like to find out from teaching in another school how much it [her desire to leave] is this school and the first year". Jo stayed in the school in her second year - "I was getting married in the summer and couldn't face the stress of getting a new job" - and felt more confident in her teaching. In the third year, she still harboured thoughts of leaving but felt "trapped in the school and teaching" feeling she didn't have the skills to

make a career outside of teaching. Jo was unusual however; most other teachers that firmed up their commitment to teaching found that they became more positive about the profession, often intertwined with their wider lives. For example, both Caroline, a secondary teacher, and Lisa, a primary teacher, harboured thoughts of travelling in the NQT year but became more committed to teaching by the third year as they put down roots, getting married and looking to start families (see the work life prioritisation section, below). In the NQT year those stating they were likely to leave teaching were those who were feeling pressured and struggled with the demands of the job, however by the third year the group of likely leavers included only one who wished to leave teaching due to such pressures; the others all intended to move into related careers, such as LA adviser, HE lecturer or another area of teaching, indicating, using Smethem's categorisation, that by the third year a number had developed a 'portfolio' orientation that wasn't apparent in their NQT year. It should be noted that these teachers, such as Gregory (see below) - in common with some of those interviewed by Moore Johnson (2004) - saw these as alternative promotion routes within education rather than separate careers.

Orientation towards promotion and taking additional responsibility

Teachers were asked in all three years about their intentions in relation to promotion. In the NQT year most – perhaps 80 per cent – of the teachers we spoke with had goals, or more or less developed plans, to advance via some sort of promotion in the medium to longer term, and most of these were prepared to move on for promotion opportunities, although three were unsure they wanted to move out of the classroom for promotion. Related to this, there was a group of perhaps six to ten who were clear that, whether promoted or not, they did not want to get too far from the classroom, so perhaps a Head of Department or Head of Year role, or a Key Stage coordinator role in primary schools - or in three cases an Advanced Skills Teacher role - would be possible, but certainly not a senior management role. Very few harboured any immediate aims for promotion, for example:

Next year I'll be teaching A level and GCSE [*externally examined courses*] and I'll have three less frees [*lessons left free from preparation and marking etc.*] – for now I want to concentrate on that. I'll have enough challenges without taking on anything else... I can't imagine going all the way to headship - heads are business managers rather than really good teachers, aren't they? I would definitely like to be a head of department though, some time. (Simon, secondary NQT)

By the second year, we found that whilst primary teachers were still harbouring thoughts of promotion, secondary teachers were actually beginning to be promoted, in small numbers. Yet primary teachers were much more likely to take on additional responsibility. As with other studies (e.g. Tracey *et al.* 2008) there was a strong expectation in most primary schools that second year teachers would take on additional responsibilities, typically subject co-ordination (9 primary teachers).

In contrast senior leaders in secondary schools tended to see the second year of teaching as one where teachers were given new challenges in their work and training to support them in working towards additional formal responsibilities in the following years, and at this point only two of the second year secondary teachers had been given significant additional formal responsibilities - in one school as a Head of Year and in another as coordinator for gifted and talented. Significantly, both of these roles were paid promotions: none of the primary teachers were paid for undertaking additional

responsibilities. Reflecting the differing opportunities in each sector, whilst half of secondary teachers wished to take on a middle leadership role, only four primary teachers did. In contrast, of the five teachers that expressed a desire to move to a very senior position in a school, either Deputy Head or Headteacher, four were primary teachers and one a secondary teacher.

Just as orientations towards teaching as a career had firmed up by the third year, so had progression plans: at this point only three interviewees didn't have a clear progression plan. There had also been a change in that by this stage most teachers had become, using Smethem's categorisation, career teachers: they were looking at some point towards promotion, with just three wishing to remain as classroom teachers. Also, at this point, many more were discussing aspirations towards senior leadership - around a third (about 15), although most of these did not aspire to headship - and two thirds aspired at least to middle leadership.

There were some differences by school type: principally that all three teachers who intended to stay in the classroom or didn't have a clear plan were in primary or special schools, and rather more secondary teachers by this point were considering senior positions in the longer term, as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2 Progression plans by school type in the third year (case study data - frequency)

	primary	secondary	special	independent
Don't know	2	0	1	0
Classroom teaching	2	0	1	0
Middle Leader	12	14	1	2
Senior Leader	6	8	0	1

The survey of third year teachers asked specifically about promotion, and this also showed up differences between primary and secondary schools, as indicated in Table 3 below. Whilst almost 90% of primary third year teachers surveyed had some level of responsibility, compared with about half of secondary teachers, only 16% of primary teachers compared with 38% of secondary teachers were paid for it.

Table 3 Paid/unpaid responsibilities held by third year teachers: comparing primary and secondary schools (survey data - percentage)

	Paid responsibility	Unpaid responsibility	No additional responsibility	Total n
Primary	16	67	17	156
Secondary	38	11	51	133

Returning to the Case Study data in relation to career plans, there were also some clear gender differences. All of the respondents who either didn't have a clear plan or wished to stay in the classroom were female, and whilst about two thirds (22) of the 33 female teachers aspired to middle management only five (15%) aspired to senior leadership, compared with ten (77%) of the 13 male teachers, aligning with the wider leadership literature indicating that senior leadership roles tend to be held by a disproportionately large proportion of men, for example Earley et al's (2012: 8) finding that at every level smaller proportions of women than men are appointed to leadership positions. One can see the contrast, for example, in the cases of Denise and Gregory. Denise, a female secondary teacher, was committed to a career in teaching from her NQT year but didn't

"see myself taking on extra responsibility in the near future" and was still in her second year "not thinking of promotion as of now... I'm probably further back in my thinking [regarding promotion] than I was twelve months ago", and in her third year when prompted expressed an unformed interest in promotion "some time" but noted "I don't really like change" and still felt largely committed to the classroom. Gregory, a male primary school teacher, similarly expressed no interest in promotion in his first year but by his second year had changed his views - "my original plan was that, basically, I get three years of classroom teaching, build my confidence, then maybe get a TLR [*Teaching and Learning Responsibility promotion*]... now I would like to get a TLR and if it isn't available I might look elsewhere". In his third year, Gregory obtained a promotion in a different primary school and was looking further ahead - "my ultimate career goal is to go down the academic route, maybe teach in a university say 20 years down the line. In the medium term, I'd like to get into middle management - Assistant or Deputy Head".

Work/life prioritisation

Although the work/life prioritisation dimension emerged most clearly during the third year, there were a few signs of its emergence even in the first year, where three female NQTs stated as part of wider discussion about their future plans that they would be likely to want to work part time in the future as they planned on having a family. In the second year, again, for some teachers this issue was becoming important. However, it became a significant issue in the third year, since it was at this stage that many of the young women in particular in our sample who were now settled into teaching as a career began to consider having children. By the way they discussed their careers, we were able to ascertain that our group of third year teachers could be characterised according to what we might call their 'future work/life orientation'; broadly, whether their future work/life plans were highly focussed on their career and promotions (*career orientation*), focussed primarily on their wider personal goals (*personal orientation*) or a combination of both (*mixed orientation*).

Analysis indicated that 13 of our teachers had a career orientation. These staff tended to have well planned career paths, which they were already beginning to follow:

"I see myself moving into a managerial role eventually. I think my ambition would be to be a deputy headteacher ... I always like to have somebody above me to line manage me... I think I've done very well to get the responsibility I have this soon. I think the school has done very well by me to give the opportunity to be a subject leader... I was asked the same question by my PGCE tutor back in 2006... and I said in three years' time I'll be head of department." (Arthur, secondary third year teacher)

Six teachers had a personal orientation, where their personal and wider life beyond teaching appeared to be of prime importance in their lives, often related to having better work life balance or specific personal plans, and typically with limited career plans as exemplified here:

"I've always been quite young for my age and maybe a few more years behind me ... wouldn't do me any harm ... I am ambitious but I don't want my ambition to be at the cost of my personal life ... I do want to have a life outside school." (Jennifer, secondary third year teacher)

The remaining 20 had a mixed orientation, with teaching a main priority but personal priorities important too, with these individuals usually having fairly well formed career plans (in nine cases the orientation was unclear). For example:

"My baby is due in January, so I'll go on maternity leave just before Christmas. I want to come back part time. Long term, I'd like to be a head teacher one day so I really want to keep my hand in, but for the next five to seven years I'll have other priorities." (Tanya, primary third year teacher)

Whilst it is perfectly possible that men may have a more personal orientation, in our sample there were clear gender differences: all nine of the male teachers for whom we could ascertain an orientation were identified as having a career orientation, whereas the female teachers were split between the three groupings (four career orientation, 20 mixed orientation, six personal orientation).

Organisational responses – career strategies and career cultures

The views of school leaders in relation to 'appropriate' promotion 'trajectories' for early career teachers were on a continuum. At one end, some SLT members and mentors viewed the early years of teaching as a time for honing the skills required of a classroom teacher and therefore taking on wider responsibilities was not to be encouraged, for example: "if people take on formal, whole school responsibilities too early in their career, it can weigh them down" (secondary senior leader). This is in line with earlier research on career stages (Day and Gu 2006).

At the other extreme, however - and rather out of line with this earlier research - some schools actively encouraged individuals to take on such responsibilities as part of their development as teachers. For example in one secondary school staff were given responsibility early in their career "as a conscious strategy – led by the head teacher – to get the best out of everyone. They need to feel challenged and valued – it encourages development, where appropriate" (secondary mentor). However, even for this respondent there was some concern about this: "Sometimes people expect more than they're given – they have some responsibility and they expect more. They have to be reminded that they are lucky to have what they have got!"

Most senior leaders tended to be somewhere in between these positions, and almost all felt that early promotion and responsibility were appropriate for some but not all teachers. Senior Leader views were related to the school context. For example, in one primary school in challenging circumstances, emphasis was placed on developing behaviour management skills, with the Senior Leader noting that she didn't think early career teachers there were considering promotion yet, rather they "want to consolidate what they did in first year and build on their good practice and confidence" to develop their classroom management skills (primary senior leader).

Career strategies

Analysis revealed two broad organisational career strategies and policies - direct career development strategies and indirect career development strategies, such as professional development retention strategies.

A small number of schools, almost all of which were secondaries, employed ***direct career development strategies and policies***. Rarely, these were explicit and formalised. More typically, they tended to be semi-formal, and linked to wider professional development policies. Larger secondary schools typically found managing a career strategy in terms of providing paid promotion – and sometimes engineering the creation of posts - easier than smaller primary schools, as with this school:

"We can offer a career structure within the school. The evidence of the last 7 or 8 years shows that we have a high degree of promotion within school and that there

are relatively few who feel they have to move to another school in order to further their career." (secondary senior leader)

For primary schools, these strategies tended to be dependent on there being opportunities. For example one headteacher noted that "More senior staff may be moving up and out, newer teachers taking roles and passing skills on to NQTs. I seek to inspire emerging leaders to do so" (primary senior leader). Another primary school SLT member indicated how primary schools have difficulties offering promotion opportunities:

"[There is] no promotion in the school, staff tend to make sideways moves within the departments taking on different roles and responsibilities. Promotion is not really a priority within the school and this has not really happened for any early career teacher although if an opportunity came up we would support a 2nd year teacher if they were right for the job. Promoting early career teachers - if there were the opportunities - would inject some life into the post and school" (primary senior leader)

Virtually all schools utilised *indirect career development strategies and policies*: other, related formal policies and strategies to support career development, particularly induction, - especially mentoring, professional development, performance management and retention strategies. One primary senior leader articulated the importance of CPD to career development well:

"In the past, the emphasis in the school may have been on craft of teaching and not fostering progress toward promotion, but now we have a head who is proactive in developing people and more encouraging for them to move on. Also in the past people may have been reluctant to move around within school; they need to establish themselves with an age group but [the head] thinks they need then to get experience with different age groups." (primary senior leader)

In addition, performance management was often linked both to promotion and retention.

The development of both of these sets of strategies were are linked to two key factors: the *needs of the teacher* in relation to developing the teacher's classroom and wider potential as a teacher, linked to the three career orientation dimensions discussed in the previous section, as well as the teacher's commitment to the school; and the *needs of the school* in supporting the pupils, wider school priorities such as filling leadership roles and teacher retention and recruitment, linked to the wider school context, in particular the size, catchment and phase of the school.

Drawing together these findings, these strategies can be conceptualised as developing within what we might call a school's *career culture*.

Career cultures and the intersection with career orientations

Some of the schools involved in the study embodied an 'action orientated culture'. Such schools tended to expect their staff to want promotion, and fitted their support programmes towards more protean careers (Hall 2002). These schools expected their teachers to take on additional responsibility and had formal career progression strategies – therefore they tended to be larger schools in less challenging circumstances with few retention problems.

Other schools had what might be described as a 'stability orientated culture'. These schools emphasised the need to develop classroom strategies for early career teachers, and focussed on mastery of classroom skills as paramount. Such schools tended to focus their development strategies on professional development rather than

explicitly focussing on promotion. Such schools tended to be smaller often primary schools.

In an analysis of these two career cultures following data collection at the end of the second year, the research team drew on Fuller and Unwin's concept of expansive and restrictive learning environments, considering that action-orientated schools tended to provide a "broad" career development environment - since they provided many opportunities to progress - and stability-orientated schools offered a "narrow" career environment, since opportunities were fewer.

The analysis presented in this paper, however, indicates that the hierarchy implied here - broad is better than narrow - is too simplistic, since it focuses predominantly on just one of the career dimensions discussed in this paper, orientation towards promotion, ignoring the importance of others. Moreover, the analysis of individual orientations presented above also indicates that early career teachers' orientations can change even over this relatively short period. The two exemplar cases below illustrate how this can occur.

Sarah was a teacher of mathematics at Forest Fields, an 11-16 school in a fairly deprived South-eastern suburb of London with around 1500 pupils, most recently rated Good by Ofsted. At Forest Fields, there was an expectation in the school that early career teachers would take on responsibility, but not necessarily take on formal promotion in their first 1-3 years. The school had an explicit career development strategy. In addition, in this school, there was a specific programme for early career teachers, with conferences run three times a year. At Forest Fields, there were no retention issues with the staff that had been appointed as NQTs: the senior leader claimed the school "values people, look at them as individuals and they try to help them plan their career and meet their needs".

Sarah's initial teacher education included a placement at Forest Fields, and she was successful in appointment to the same school. Sarah was already committed to teaching as a profession in her NQT year: "I intend to stay in teaching; I see it as a job for life." She also had a strong orientation towards promotion, intending to stay in the school "as long as there's a job here for me" - although she qualified this by noting that she might leave for a particular promotion and knew that it wasn't going to happen in this school at this time. However, she would feel forced to leave in this situation and "can't think of any other reason why I would leave." In her second year, Sarah had achieved a promotion but felt less happy in her department - she felt "it isn't running as well as it could" and so was "keeping an eye out for other jobs." However, she reiterated that she would not be leaving because she felt unsupported or not encouraged here, but because of the circumstances in which she found herself: "If it were not for the situation ... in an ideal world I'd stay forever!" By the third year, Sarah had received another promotion to second in department and her views on staying in the school were clearly wrapped up with promotion opportunities in the future: "I aim to be HoD in 2/3 years and probably at this school - I was a pupil here and did my training here, but I would move if there was no vacancy here." By shifting from a position of wanting to stay with promotion to wishing to progress by moving if necessary, Sarah demonstrates a hardening protean attitude, and an increasing ambivalence towards staying in the school.

Daisy provides an example of a different trajectory. Daisy taught at Smith House, a very successful (rated Outstanding by Ofsted in the two most recent inspections), very large primary school in North London. The Headteacher of Smith

House noted that the school had very little mobility: "most movement is down to maternity and some for promotion... Once staff are recruited they generally stay as it's a good place to work and staff tend to be happy. The school has developed a very good way of supporting each other and innovation is valued very highly". Daisy also noted that "The school is very supportive of training and personal development, which is a good thing."

Like Sarah at Forest Fields, Daisy had ambitions from the start, but she was aware of the need to look to the longer term in primary schools that did not afford the same opportunities as secondaries for promotion. She intended in her NQT year to stay in teaching, and "to stay at this school for the immediate future." Even in her NQT year, she had plans to move into senior management in the long term, but wanted to stay in the classroom for the foreseeable future and saw the school as offering the opportunities she wanted. By her second year, Daisy was still planning on staying at the school "for the foreseeable future" and now the long term. Promotion was beginning to become an issue for her, but not an urgent one: "The only reason I would leave would be for promotion if no opportunities came along... but I'm not thinking about that for at least 5 years." In her third year, Daisy had been given responsibility for PSHE but did not feel well supported and personal circumstances had recently changed, and with them her commitment to the school: "I am quite career-minded. But I want to try to fit in having children, too. I recently got engaged, and the school is a good one for women with children - there are a lot of teachers who have gone off to have a baby or two as job shares or on part time contracts." Daisy demonstrates a change in work/life orientation, with an increasing commitment to the school over time.

Concluding discussion

The findings presented in this paper discuss career orientation for individual teachers across three dimensions – orientation to promotion, orientation towards staying in the profession and work/life orientation. The senior leader and teacher data on career expectations presented above indicates that the research on early career teacher careers to date, which focus on consolidation and development of classroom practice, underplays the multiple roles and expectations of teachers in their first career phase. The sample of early career teachers interviewed for this study appeared to have a stronger focus on promotion in the early career phase than was found in earlier studies such as those of Moore Johnson (2004), Huberman (2005), Sikes, Measor and Woods (1985) and Day *et al.* (2006). Senior leaders in these teachers' schools themselves suggested that early career teachers were looking towards career progression at an earlier point – they "wanted more" in the memorable words of one. This indicates that some teachers are taking a more protean approach to career (Hall 2002). In addition, even across the relatively short time span of this study – from the first to the third year in teaching – teachers' career orientations changed. Intentions about whether to stay in the profession firmed up, with most intending to stay in the profession for the long term, and many seeking and gaining promotion. Yet by the third year a group of teachers, all female, taking a differing view of their work/life priorities, were starting to consider a career break to have children.

The article provides a new perspective on how schools themselves deal with the career orientations of their teachers, developing a categorisation of what I term organisational "career cultures". Influenced by factors including school size, context and broader school leaders' values, I suggest that schools can be considered to have a predominantly *action orientated career culture*, encouraging and supporting promotion

and career progression both within and beyond the school, or a predominantly *stability orientated career culture*, encouraging staff retention in the school in relatively stable roles. The case studies of Sarah and Daisy show how for some individual teachers, as their career orientations change so their 'fit' with the career culture of the school can alter, either moving towards a closer fit or further away with related changes to feelings of belonging to the school.

Other studies such as Moore Johnson (2004) and Bullough (2008) demonstrate the importance of the school context in providing varied opportunities for development in relation to retention in the profession, and there is a danger that schools with stability-orientated cultures may not provide these opportunities. Moore Johnson and Donaldson (2004) point to a potential way forward here, showing how, even where chances for promotion are limited, schools can provide "hybrid" or "differentiated" roles combining classroom teaching, coaching and administration. This kind of active approach to supporting teachers' careers broadly defined can be achieved even in small schools, and in fact Moore Johnson and Donaldson (2004) comment that such approaches work in schools with flatter hierarchies that have "more flexibility in staffing, and are often small and less rigidly structured" (p.247).

Changes in orientations of teachers towards promotion, teaching as a career and work/life positioning are a typical if not universal feature of individuals as they follow their career paths, as studies such as Day and Gu (2010) identify. By focussing attention on how organisations deal with careers this article illustrates that since these individuals' orientations change, the fit with the school environment can change over time. If school leaders are more conscious of this potential change in fit between school culture and teacher orientations, then they are in a stronger position to plan for it.

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