Preparing newly qualified teachers in England to teach pupils who have English as an additional language

Bernadette Hall\textsuperscript{a} and Wasyl Cajkler\textsuperscript{b,*}

\textsuperscript{a}Leicester City Local Authority, UK; \textsuperscript{b}University of Leicester, UK

The present study explores the perspectives of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in England entering the profession in 2005 and 2006 about their training and induction to meet the needs of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL). Findings from a survey and from interviews revealed that the greatest concerns of NQTs related to the teaching of literacy and the assessment of EAL pupils’ language skills. Perspectives on initial teacher training offered by English higher education institutions were mixed, with greatest importance given to the quality of school placements offered by training providers. Collaborative support was reported to be available in the induction year, by the third term of which confidence levels had risen. NQTs had found ways to develop their skills in teaching and assessing pupils with EAL. Nevertheless, while encouraging, the reported levels were not yet such that either teachers or the Training and Development Agency for Schools, the body responsible for teacher training in England, could feel satisfied with this aspect of teacher development.

Introduction

In 2007, provisional figures indicated a primary school population of 3,978,760 pupils in maintained schools in England. Of these, the number from an ethnic background described as non-white was 723,510, equivalent to 21.9\% of the total. According to the survey conducted by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the then name of the ministry responsible for education policy in England, the percentage of primary pupils with a first language other than English was 13.5\% (447,650 pupils; DfES, 2007). So the teaching of English as an additional language (EAL) is a key educational issue in many cities in England, where the EAL pupil ‘is the mainstream’ (Cummins & Cameron, 1994). This present research, conducted in

\textsuperscript{*}Corresponding author. School of Education, University of Leicester, 21 University Road, Leicester LE1 7RF, UK. Email: wc4@leicester.ac.uk
one city, investigated newly qualified teachers’ (NQTs) perspectives on their preparation for multilingual primary schools after two terms of their induction year.

Thornton (2002) highlighted the results from a national survey conducted by the body responsible for teacher training programmes, the Training and Development Agency (TDA, 2002), with the heading ‘New staff unprepared for racially diverse classrooms’. This showed that, out of a sample of 5500 NQTs, only 30% considered their training on preparation to teach ethnic minorities to be effective. Thornton reported that NQTs wanted more input on the teaching of pupils with EAL.

Later, Davies (2005)—reflecting on subsequent TDA surveys that included a new question about teaching pupils with EAL—concluded that this is an area where performance was still rated relatively low when compared with other aspects of training, although improvements had been noted since 2002. The concern continues. For instance, early in 2007, the executive of one of the largest teacher unions in England—the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers—proposed the following motion (NASUWT, 6 January 2007), although not ballotted for debate:

Conference is concerned at the very serious shortcoming in the training provision for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in preparing them to teach pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and in meeting the needs of pupils with English as an additional language. Conference is deeply concerned that, despite successive annual feedback from NQTs, the Training and Development Agency (TDA) has failed to deliver any significant improvement to the quality of equal opportunities and diversity in their course programmes.

In the context of such concerns, we conducted a study across two years among NQTs in an urban local authority with a high percentage of pupils with EAL (42%) from a wide variety of linguistic backgrounds. All primary schools in the city have pupils whose first language is not English, with over 100 languages spoken by primary school children. We investigated satisfaction and confidence levels of NQTs, with regard to their training and the quality of support offered to them in their first year of teaching.

In this paper, we report findings to two of our principal questions:

- How effective the NQTs judged that their teacher training programmes had been for EAL
- How they were supported during the induction year for the teaching of pupils with EAL.

This was an opportunity to report locally expressed perspectives on an issue of national importance.

**Induction of newly qualified teachers in England**

NQTs face a range of challenges, first and foremost their own development and confirmation of their status as qualified teachers. In addition, they have to address the demands of the National Curriculum for England and the educational needs of their students. Cazden (1988) has pointed out that there is no parallel in the adult world to the linguistic and interactional structures of the classroom. Much of the formal
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classroom discourse is directed by the teacher, whose aim is to create a social environment conducive to learning through regular activities and discussion frameworks. This is a complex task for any teacher, not just for NQTs.

In England, the TDA requires trainee teachers to demonstrate that they are ‘able to improve their own teaching, by evaluating it, learning from the effective practice of others and from evidence. They are motivated and able to take increasing responsibility for their own professional development’ (Standard 1.7; TDA, 2007, p. 9). However, Tickle (2001, p. 53) points out that there is no agreed curriculum for induction. What tends to be offered is a variable programme based around the induction standards for teachers working in England and the NQT’s career entry profile, a record of the new teacher’s development with targets.

Induction year demands (introduced in England in 1999) differ substantially from those experienced in training (Parkinson & Pritchard, 2005):

- NQTs have to assume immediate responsibility for whole classes.
- NQTs may be expected to accept similar targets and achieve just as much as their more experienced peers despite the fact that their training may have left them under-prepared for the challenges of the classroom (Fletcher & Barrett, 2004, p. 321).
- Higher education institutions are rarely involved in induction procedures, although some collaborate with local education authorities to put on further training.

Many NQTs join the profession with ‘significant gaps in their understanding’ (Parkinson & Pritchard, 2005, p. 65), following the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), the most common route to a teacher qualification in England, or other training programme. So, the induction year is a critical time for development within which NQTs are expected to extend their knowledge and skills as they are socialised into the profession. According to Killeavy:

An induction phase offers opportunities for new teachers to become habituated to learning from the beginning, and be afforded opportunities to consult and collaborate with their colleagues to engage collectively in the learning profession. (2006, p. 169)

Several benefits have been identified from the induction year in both primary and secondary schools:

- 10% protected time off-timetable (Bubb et al., 2002, p. 119), although Kyriacou and O’Connor (2003, p. 189) report that up to 40% of their sample of 43 had problems with this;
- opportunities for helpful dialogue with colleagues (Harrison, 2002);
- bridging initial teacher training and the induction period (Office for Standards in Education, 2001);
- use of the career entry profile as a basis for initial discussion in more than 85% of secondary schools (Parkinson & Pritchard, 2005, p. 70).

Within the induction framework, the focus on EAL has to find its place as NQTs grapple with a range of standards and the everyday strategic demands inherent in the
complex interactions of the classroom (Erickson, 1996). In English schools with EAL pupils, the induction arrangements must give attention to supporting the development of teacher understanding of the multilingual classroom. Bourne has welcomed recent developments in training:

new forms of teacher training which involve student teacher and newly qualified teachers to work with an experienced teacher acting as a ‘mentor’ in co-planning and co-teaching, making co-operative teaching more of an accepted part of classroom practice. (2001, p. 265)

There has been no evaluation of such approaches in relation to NQTs and EAL in England, but there have been general studies of induction arrangements. Williams and Prestage (2002, p. 43) highlight the significance of collaborative cultures to the successful induction of NQTs and how lack of support from other staff contributes to attrition. Bubb and Earley (2006) concluded that the development of supportive learning communities is essential to providing pupils with a good education. So, failure to provide appropriate and supportive induction works against both the interests and the short-term and long-term needs of pupils.

In the USA, Ball (2000), in her role as teacher trainer, initiated and evaluated a developmental programme to improve teaching in diverse urban classrooms. Trainee teachers were given relevant readings and opportunities for interactive discussions to encourage self-reflection, followed by focused teaching practice. Ball noted how the student teachers’ discourse patterns changed over time, and these led to changes in their classroom practice—resulting in more effective support for EAL learners.

Similar studies have not been replicated in the United Kingdom, where general studies have focused on how new teachers perceive induction arrangements (for example, Heaney, 2001; Jones et al., 2002). The latter concluded that induction arrangements for NQTs had improved dramatically since the introduction of the statutory induction year in September 1999, but evidence for the effectiveness of induction arrangements in general is limited. See Totterdell et al. (2004) for a review of recent research (1998–2003).

NQTs have to remain motivated to persevere in the profession. Parkinson and Pritchard (2005) reported that, in 1999, 18% of new teachers had left the profession during the first three years of employment. Bubb and Earley (2006, p. 6) claim that the attrition rate is 30% in the first three years, a similar rate reported for the USA where there are no statutory induction arrangements (Parkinson & Pritchard, 2005, p. 64 citing Perez et al., 1997). Killeavy (2006, p. 169, citing Smithers & Robinson, 2003) claims that the attrition of teachers in England over their first five years mirrors that of the USA, of between one-third and one-half.

**Newly qualified teachers and pedagogy for English as an additional language**

Bourne and Flewitt (2002) concluded that NQTs entering schools in England need to be familiar with the following: bilingualism, second-language-acquisition research, good practice in the induction of new arrivals in school and their pupils’
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social, cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic background and traditions. This is an ambitious agenda, but new teachers also need a range of pedagogic skills that include:

- use of visual aids and practical activities to teach literacy;
- ability to develop language skills across the curriculum;
- skills needed to assess second language learning;
- ability to differentiate between EAL and special educational needs; and
- ability to work with specialist EAL staff and to deploy other professionals and volunteers to support children’s learning.

NQTs also need to know that being conversationally fluent is not enough for pupils to access the academic language requirements of curriculum subjects (Latika Davis reported by Bloom, 2007). The development of cognitive academic language proficiency is necessary for success across the curriculum (Cummins, 1979).

Where available, EAL specialist staff in schools and local authorities are an important source of support. They should have expertise in what Franson et al. (2002) describe as EAL descriptors of good practice for EAL specialists; that is, in language pedagogy, bilingual education, assessment (formative and summative), monitoring and recording (Franson et al., 2002, p. 6). They should therefore be able to provide support for NQTs, and the level and availability of such support formed part of our research.

NQTs also need to keep abreast of information about ethnic minority pupils (DfES, 2006a) and national and local developments relating to ethnicity and education; for example, the DfES initiatives associated with Aiming High (e.g. Raising Achievement of Minority Ethnic Pupils (DfES, 2003) and Supporting Effective Use of EMAG—the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (DfES, 2004). The most recent initiative was the EAL pilot in 2004–2006, which led to the development of an official programme within the Primary Strategy. The resulting training materials (DfES, 2006b) are now available for all schools to use with their staff.

How attainable are such skills and knowledge when the EAL-related standard is just one TDA induction standard among many that lead to qualified teacher status? The importance of early training for NQTs has been stressed by Richards and Taylor (1998, p. 93), who point to a considerable amount of research evidence that suggests classroom and pedagogic practices—established early in teachers’ careers, often during their training—are immensely durable and influential throughout their careers. What happens in initial teacher training programmes (BEd, PGCE or alternative routes) and in induction is likely to have lasting impact on trainees. These were the focus of this study.

**Methodology**

Two surveys were conducted using opportunity samples afforded by participants attending local authority training events for NQTs in the third term of their induction year. The structure of the closed items in the questionnaire was modelled on the TDA
surveys (TDA, 2005, 2006), asking NQTs to estimate their levels on a scale of one to four (very good, good, adequate, poor) for:

- The quality of initial teacher training.
- Their confidence to teach pupils with EAL.
- Their understanding about language and social backgrounds.
- Their confidence to teach aspects of language (e.g. grammar, vocabulary) to EAL pupils.

The questionnaires were analysed using SPSS software, firstly to identify basic frequencies and then to conduct comparison of findings. The TDA national evaluations (TDA, 2005, 2006) report good/very good responses as indicators of success. From this, we infer that the adequate category is not seen as an indication of positive experience or effectiveness. We intend, therefore, to use this threshold of effectiveness to provide comparability with TDA evaluation practice. As a result, good/very good responses in our survey will be described as ‘positive’.

In each year, six NQTs were interviewed (semi-structured format) about both their training and induction year experiences, including the support received in school and from outside school. Interviews explored how NQTs felt about teaching EAL with reference to:

- NQTs’ experience of training (both preservice and in-service).
- Support received (e.g. the dialogic activities in which NQTs engage in their first year of teaching).

**Participants**

Following requests for participation, 44 NQTs in 2005 and 41 in 2006 agreed to participate in the survey. Of these 85 respondents, 73 had followed traditional initial teacher training programmes (almost all PGCE) and 12 had followed alternative school-based routes into the profession. They had attended 14 higher education institutions throughout England. Thirty-nine NQTs specialised in the core curriculum subjects of English (16%), mathematics (12%) and science (17%), but the majority (53%) had a non-core subject specialism (e.g. early years, information and communications technology).

Thirty-three per cent of the questionnaire sample claimed to be bilingual or multilingual, with the most commonly cited languages being Panjabi (10 speakers) and Gujarati (seven speakers), although others also occurred (Urdu, Hindi, Khachi, Pushto, Shona). There were single speakers of Greek, French, Irish, Swahili and Ndebele. The language background of respondents was a factor taken into account when analysing how confident NQTs were when teaching bilingual pupils.

For the second phase of the research, 12 NQTS (11 females), who had collectively trained in seven different programmes, including one from a school-based initial teacher training (SCITT) programme, agreed to a semi-structured interview that was audio-recorded in the NQT’s school. There were six monolingual English
speakers, three Gujarati speakers, one Irish speaker, one Italian speaker and one Punjabi/Gujarati speaker. The interviewees were drawn from a total of seven primary schools.

Findings

The questionnaire set out to answer all four principal questions while interviews focused principally on support and professional development in the induction year. These are explored in more detail below.

Quality of initial training

When asked to rate the overall quality of initial training, less than one-half of the sample regarded the first three aspects of provision positively, as shown in Table 1.

In each case, the responses were bunched in the centre of the scale but with higher numbers in each case selecting adequate rather than good. Of these, the least positively rated was ‘Quality of training for further development of knowledge and skills in teaching EAL pupils’—that is, to prepare them to develop their practice (through future professional development)—with just 35% responding positively. The fourth item, ‘Quality of School Placements’, received a higher rating, with exactly one-half of the sample rating this as positive, although even here a substantial minority (26%) described the arrangements as poor. In this category, the positive rating about placements was still too low for training providers (higher education institutions and training schools) to feel satisfied with the provision, given the 50% who deemed arrangements to be less than good.

While not yet strongly positive, the overall response compares well with national TDA surveys (for example, TDA, 2005, 2006) that include one question about preparation to teach pupils with EAL (and one about preparation for teaching pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds). Of the 10,590 NQTs who responded in 2005, 27% thought their preparation was poor and only 28% thought their training was positive with regard to EAL. This positive rating rose to 32% in 2006 whilst the poor category decreased to 23%. The responses in our survey were consistently above the 32% figure that the TDA 2006 evaluation had reported in answer to their question about EAL.

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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
<th>Poor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for teaching pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for working with pupils with EAL</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of training for developing further knowledge and skills in teaching EAL pupils</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of school placements in school with EAL pupils</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
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Table 1. Evaluation of the quality of initial training (%)
The data we obtained from the questionnaires were supplemented by information from semi-structured interviews conducted with 12 of the respondents. Great emphasis was placed on the importance of useful and relevant placement in schools during initial training, although at least three of the 12 interviewees were given no experience in an EAL context at all. The other nine interviewees had more positive and useful experiences.

Two interviewees described their training in general as very good; others highlighted good points such as effective speakers, but there were some less than satisfied customers.

Two of the interviewees claimed to have had no input on EAL and another said she had received very little, whilst five mentioned a single focus day in their training programme. Another interviewee reported that she was prepared for advanced bilingual learners, but not beginners. The impression was (perhaps inevitably) of uneven patterns of training, often with EAL provision being tackled through a focus day or through a small number of specialist inputs. Three interviewees mentioned the value of inputs from visiting speakers during their PGCE; for example:

We had RB. He came and did a talk and he was very enthusiastic and it’s important to get enthusiastic EAL teachers saying how good EAL schools are.

Not all were enthusiastic about inputs received:

I did have a session on EAL but it did not come close to covering what I’d needed to know to come and teach here.

Despite some positive evaluations, preparation for teaching up to 13.5% of the primary school population seems to be offered relatively small amounts of time in the teacher training curriculum.

### Confidence levels to teach pupils with EAL

Participants were asked to estimate their own current level of confidence to teach pupils with EAL (see Table 2). With one exception, positive ratings were below 50%.

Among the least satisfactory of the seven aspects investigated was ‘Confidence to integrate newly-arrived EAL learners’, with positive ratings again modest, a mean

<table>
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<th>Confident in …</th>
<th>Positive</th>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching pupils with EAL</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their knowledge of key principles relating to teaching EAL pupils</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinguishing between pupils with EAL and those with SEN</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using strategies to support pupils with EAL</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapting materials and resources for EAL learners</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiating classroom tasks for EAL learners</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating newly arrived EAL learners</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of 2.19 (standard deviation, 0.8) on a scale of one to four—with some slight general improvement noted in the second year. In addition, the ability to differentiate classroom tasks was relatively weak compared with the other components.

When comparisons were made between the 2005 and 2006 groups, the data suggested that there was a more confident group in 2006. For example, looking at the first aspect (‘Teaching pupils with EAL’), 55% from 2006 said their current level of confidence was positive compared with 35% in 2005. Chi-square tests revealed a ‘near significant to significant’ trend (significance, 0.088) in the increased level of confidence in the second year. Further surveys are being undertaken to determine whether this positive local improvement is maintained, or whether 2006 just happened to yield more positive NQTs.

Interviews revealed that some trainees were concerned about their understanding of the needs of pupils from different language groups. Again, the quality of placements was a critical factor. One trainee from a very large university programme complained that the only direct contact she had with a second language speaker was the child of a Scandinavian diplomat. The SCITT trainee, on the other hand, particularly valued the placements that he was able to benefit from: ‘If I didn’t go to the schools that I did, I wouldn’t have had that experience ... My SCITT training prepared me for [teaching in] X city’.

Pre-training experience as teaching assistants (TAs) in multilingual primary schools was beneficial for two of the NQTs before completing PGCEs:

I would advise that people should do learning support work before becoming a teacher, because you get a good insight into teaching.

I was a TA at X for a year before I did the PGCE so I knew a bit from then, but most of my knowledge came from that year at X rather than anything I did on the PGCE.

Such are the pressures on training programmes that this kind of rich experiential preparation may just have been out of reach for some trainees. As a result, professional development programmes in the induction year perhaps need to be reviewed to take account of gaps that NQTs report here.

Knowledge of linguistic and social background of pupils

Levels of confidence were not high, most NQTs reporting limited knowledge of linguistic and social backgrounds. Large numbers of NQTs declared their confidence in their knowledge about other language backgrounds to be poor. There were more positive ratings for South Asian languages (e.g. 32% confident about teaching learners with Gujarati as a first language, 26% confident about Punjabi, 22% confident about Urdu), but this was in part explained by the number of bilingual NQTs in the two cohorts who spoke these languages. There were significantly lower levels of knowledge for Chinese, Somali or Portuguese languages among all NQTs, the least known about being Portuguese. Analysis of questionnaires revealed that the bilingual NQTs in the sample were more confident when teaching speakers of their own or related languages (e.g. Gujarati, Urdu and Punjabi). However, the same
bilingual NQTs expressed lower confidence in relation to other languages and their communities.

A scale for East European languages was not available as these were not considered significant when the project began. An ‘other’ category was available in which the most common languages inserted were Polish, Czech, and Slovak.

The need to learn about different languages and cultures was a frequent theme in the interviews, especially with monolingual NQTs. The interviewees reiterated the importance of the training-year school placements and the opportunities for learning and development afforded by the induction year during which they had become more aware:

- I think I have increased my linguistic knowledge because you don’t really think about how languages are structured before and now I really do.
- I feel I have learned a lot about Muslim culture.
- Just everything they tell you, what they did after school … It really opens your eyes. You bring that into your teaching.

Several interviewees mentioned the challenge of teaching Polish learners of English. For two NQTs more background knowledge was needed on European (Portuguese and Polish) and African languages (Somali, Shona) than had been given in training, one monolingual person expressing some criticism of the exclusive focus on Asian languages:

- But I felt on my training they did just focus on Asian EAL and not things like the European languages as well. And now, I’ve come in here and I’m faced with Polish children … I haven’t got a clue …

Although the questionnaires revealed much lower levels of confidence on the part of all NQTs (monolingual or bilingual) when faced with Somali, Chinese or Portuguese first-language speakers, interviewees (including bilinguals) described learning about others during induction, for example:

- I guess Somali background, I didn’t really know anything. … Most of them are Muslim and where I live I’ve got a Muslim family opposite me … I’ve got Punjabi friends … I’m Muslim as well. I think cultural backgrounds I’m pretty aware of that, linguistic as well. Probably just the Somalis and I’ve become more aware. It’s nothing shocking or surprising.

Being bilingual led to more confidence about linguistic knowledge but the range of this confidence was restricted to one’s own or related language groups.

Confidence to teach and assess aspects of language

We asked NQTs to reflect on their ability to meet the pupils’ needs in regard to teaching the four skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) and pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. Positive ratings for these key aspects of language in descending order were as presented in Table 3. While differences are not significant, the fact that reading and writing should be at the lower end of the scale at this stage of NQTs’
development is perhaps surprising given the investment in literacy strategies and associated initiatives since 1997 in England.

Finally, perceptions of ability to ‘Assess pupils with EAL’ were somewhat low; only 29% of respondents were positive about this, 59 adequate and 12 poor. In addition, three interviewees mentioned that there had been very little on assessment in their training, but almost all of them reported more confidence and skill as the induction year progressed, for example:

I didn’t know how to do it to start with and I do now…

Yes, due to practical experience …

If you had asked me that when I first started I’d probably have said No, but now the year has gone on, I think I’d say say … I’ve tweaked what I know to my own class who are all EAL pupils and I’ve had to tweak it again to assess them …

### Overall levels of satisfaction and confidence

To arrive at overall scales of satisfaction and confidence for the four principal questions about the following:

- quality of initial training,
- confidence to teach pupils with EAL,
- understanding about language backgrounds, and
- confidence to teach and assess aspects of language,

analyses were conducted to test the internal reliability of the items included under each factor. Results of Cronbach alpha tests showed the four factors having acceptable levels of internal consistency with high reliability coefficients (α values; see Table 4).

Having established the reliability of the scales, subsequent analysis identified a mean for each (in the final row of Table 4). So, for example, we could calculate that the overall mean score for confidence to teach pupils with EAL over the two cohorts of NQTs was 2.32 (standard deviation, 0.62) on the scale of one to four (i.e. large numbers of respondents did not give positive ratings in the survey). In order to meet TDA expectations for positive ratings in each category, the mean should have been much closer to three.
The 12 interviews were the principal source of the data on this issue. Eight of the NQTs were part of the EAL pilot (outcomes published in DfES, 2006b). This meant that the interviewed NQTs had attended at least two staff meetings per term that focused on EAL. The Pilot was a national initiative to raise the achievement of advanced bilingual learners. These NQTs saw EAL as having high priority not only because they were teaching pupils with EAL but also because EAL was a particular school development focus. They recognised the support given both from within the school and from outside in the form of a visit from a specialist consultant and the availability of Pilot training materials.

The Pilot was not available to every NQT but all were offered one full training day by the local Ethnic Minority Service. Only four took advantage of this, as one NQT explained:

I missed the NQT days because of supply cover … there are four of us.

Perhaps this low level of attendance could be explained because most of the interviewees were involved in the EAL pilot, and so had some training on site. Nevertheless, where schools appoint multiple NQTs in any year, the opportunities for attendance at further training may be squeezed.

Four reported attendance at a university organised session, provided by a local Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant consultant, which was well evaluated.

It was good, because we had XXXXX XXXX from Y. Gave us a whole day event. That was the single most useful thing. His handouts were brilliant, everything he said was brilliant. He really went through the whole ‘first language to support your second language’, and a lot of people don’t know that.

Four other respondents mentioned miscellaneous forms of support that they had found very useful, including courses in Building Learning Power, Accelerated Learning and a speech and language course. On the other hand, four did not attend any external training at all.

The professional support that all interviewees valued most was the opportunity to work with others. Some of this appeared to be informal and relatively unstructured,
such as discussions with colleagues, which were particularly valued. Support was often made available in response to needs arising.

We’re quite a strong staff in that respect. If we have a problem, everyone will try to help if they possibly can.

With XXX, the deputy head at the start of the year, because we have children going out for language groups. I wasn’t quite sure who to send, so I discussed that with her, and she said ‘Level 1, Level 2’ as in the QCA levels.

This feedback gives evidence of the existence of the collaborative cultures critical to the development of NQTs (earlier discussed; Williams & Prestage, 2002, p. 43) in the seven schools covered by this research. None complained of a lack of opportunity to discuss with others. Interviewees outlined support from structured observations and feedback opportunities. In most schools there were opportunities to observe lessons taught by the EAL coordinator, and in one case to shadow the coordinator. Several cases of joint planning were reported and team teaching was mentioned twice:

Our EMAG co-ordinator worked with Year 1 to teach science last autumn, so we planned that together, and that was delivered through team teaching, although one interviewee noted this would not be feasible as a regular occurrence because of the time involved. The importance of the school EAL coordinator for advice, modelling and resources was noted by nine of the 12 respondents.

We’ve had a lot of INSET from [our coordinator] which has been good. We, I, obviously, have support from XXX in lessons, so he’s always suggesting different things.

I’ve worked with XXXX a lot—we did the EAL maths pilot together, so that was specifically focussing on EAL—vocabulary, maths language and kinaesthetic learning in maths, so that was all EAL. So I spent a good time talking to her about EAL.

In one school, where the EAL coordinator was a new and recent appointee to the role, the NQTs understandably focused less on the contribution of the coordinator. Given the importance attached to the coordinator by all other respondents, it raises concern about the decline of this role, and a trend to secure replacement of teachers by teaching assistants in some schools (Bourne, 2001). The EAL coordinator was seen as critical to the development of good practice in NQTs.

Eight interviewees highlighted the contribution of TAs, bilingual in a range of languages, to give bilingual support. This follows one of the key messages of the EAL pilot programme—to use the child’s first language as a tool for learning.

I had a child who came as a total beginner in October. She also had emotional problems—she hadn’t ever been to school … no English whatever, and emotional problems as well. … What we did with her, she worked with a TA who spoke Gujarati with her …and at the very end of the year she started speaking to me, which is wonderful.

With the Polish children its been easy because of X [Polish-speaking TA]. It’s been easy to come round and ask her questions … and ask her advice on things.

Of all factors highlighted by interviewees, the two of the most commonly mentioned related to the quality and availability of an in-school EAL coordinator and bilingual TAs.
Implications

We set out to investigate NQT perceptions about their initial teacher training for EAL, and support for professional development during the induction year.

Ratings for initial teacher training across the two years of our local study were higher than in the response to the TDA question on EAL (TDA, 2005, 2006). However, perceptions about the effectiveness of training were varied. Interviewees mentioned specific gaps; for example, for a minority there was a lack of quality in the placements and for some there was a lack of training in methods of assessing EAL pupils. As a minimum, these findings suggest that training providers need to review both how they prepare trainees for assessment of pupils’ language skills and the arrangements they have for placements in schools with EAL pupils.

What is of particular concern are the low levels of confidence reported for the teaching of reading and writing to pupils with EAL, not an outcome that we had predicted (see Table 3). Presumably, experience in the NQT year and beyond helps to address this, but studies are needed to observe change in NQT practice over time to explore levels of understanding and response to EAL pupils as they complete their induction period and progress further as teachers. To what extent do the low levels of confidence that we identified persist in this important area of professional practice?

There was also a call for more input on language backgrounds. Questionnaires and interviews confirmed this when NQTs were asked about their knowledge of linguistic backgrounds. Our findings about the need to know more about linguistic and cultural backgrounds echo those of Hall (2001), whose study involved interviews with 30 teachers, most of whom had several years of teaching experience. The implication is that more could be done to prepare trainees (both monolingual and bilingual) for the multilingual classroom, a point made 10 years earlier by Edwards (1997) when reviewing preservice preparation for the teaching of pupils with EAL.

Local authorities might consider offering induction programmes that include more orientation to languages used by pupils in their areas (language awareness programmes), in addition to the work they do on strategies for teaching pupils with EAL. Developing additional background understanding during initial training represents a significant challenge, when each school in an urban area may hold children whose language experience involves the development and maintenance of multiple identities on a multiple scale. For example, Gregory and Williams (2000, p. 169) describe the home literacy practices of Bangladeshi children, but other children may not have comparable experiences. Again, language and culture awareness training might be part of the solution. NQT feedback, however, suggests that if training institutions are able to improve the provision of placements to offer work with EAL pupils, this may help to address the need.

For EAL pedagogy, positive help and support were available to all 12 interviewees—but starting points varied (one had never experienced an EAL setting in her BEd training, whilst most PGCE programmes and the SCITT included opportunities in school). Furthermore, attendance at training events by NQTs during the induction
period varied from school to school, with one-third of interviewees not attending any at all.

There were differences between the responses of NQTs in EAL pilot schools and those not in pilot schools, the former acknowledging at least a visit from someone or the availability of outside specialist support, with one respondent saying:

EAL pilot …. I think if I had a really big issue and I didn’t know how to go about dealing with it, I'd go to XX, I think.

The feasibility of such focused support being available to all schools on a continuing basis is an issue, hence the importance of the training pack for dissemination to schools (DfES, 2006b). The idea behind this toolkit is that schools use it as a focus for development of good practice and raise the achievement of pupils with EAL. While the majority of schools may have used the toolkit within the geographical area of this study, the degree to which it has been adopted elsewhere is not known. Its dissemination and effectiveness could be the subject of future evaluation.

Interviews revealed that, during the induction year, NQTs recognised a number of key factors that supported their successful development in the teaching of pupils with EAL, most notably:

- the value of collaborative dialogue with other colleagues;
- key contributions made by the EAL coordinator in many schools; and
- the importance of EAL being a whole school agenda (this was particularly the case in schools that had been involved in the EAL pilot; DfES, 2006b), and not an issue for withdrawal groups and incidental responses.

These conditions were seen as essential to the development of NQTs’ confidence and pedagogic skills.

**Conclusion**

Our research confirmed that when NQTs enter the induction year they are partially but not wholly prepared for the task of teaching EAL. However, collaborative cultures were described in the seven schools from which interviewees were drawn. Although there were skills and knowledge gaps on entry, NQTs reported bridging these through experience and support during their induction year. What was suggested, although only loosely specified, was that the bridging of the gaps is scaffolded through professional development activity at classroom, school and local authority level. Such support is of significant importance to both pupils and teachers and should be the focus of further research and development. The challenge for local authorities is to make sure that the provision of this support is available and effective in all schools.

Recent national TDA surveys (TDA, 2005, 2006) have provided rather negative and perhaps demoralising snapshot assessments of the preparation for teaching EAL. On the other hand, this local study suggests that the situation is not as negative as national TDA surveys might suggest, but there are many challenges (some pedagogic, some linguistic, others cultural and social) and levels of confidence were still a source
of concern. Naturally, levels of satisfaction and confidence vary on entry but support in the induction period was generally well evaluated in the interviews. Further studies of this important issue are needed to investigate practice and explore ways in which training and induction programmes cope with the vast demands made upon them so that best practice can be understood and disseminated. This may help to raise skill and confidence levels in relation to pupils with EAL. We will continue to pursue this research agenda.

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