

Catching them early: Promoting teacher retention by identifying potential early-career leavers

Teacher Education Advancement
Network Conference

Cultivating Learning

5th-6th May 2016

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Background

- “...Record numbers of teachers are quitting the profession - 50,000 this year, more than actually entered the profession.”

(Shadow Education Secretary Lucy Powell, [14 December 2015](#)).

Background

- “With chronic shortages of teachers in our schools, this Government is risking the education of the next generation. Ministers have mishandled teacher training, putting applicants off and constantly talked down the profession, causing thousands of teachers to quit. As a result, half of all schools had unfilled positions at the start of this year and are being forced to turn to unqualified staff, temporary supply teachers, non-specialists, and larger class sizes to try to plug the gaps.”

(Shadow Education Secretary Lucy Powell, [14 December 2015](#)).

Background

- 90% of teachers had considered leaving the profession in the past two years
- 50% actually planned to leave within the next two years
- 28% of newly qualified teachers leave the profession within the first five years of attaining their first employment

(NUT/YouGov survey, 2015).

Background

- This high rate of wastage is exacerbated by current under-recruitment experienced by Initial Teacher Training (ITT) providers
- With a projected 9% rise in pupil numbers in England by 2020, commentators note that a 'perfect storm' of serious teacher shortage is likely brewing

Background

- There is a correlation between staff turnover rates and the level of school disadvantage.
- Poorly performing schools generally find it difficult to recruit and keep their teachers, which leads to a downward spiral of inexperienced staff teaching lesser achieving children.
- The current research intends to determine whether it is possible to **identify teachers who later become dissatisfied, before they qualify** so that appropriate action can be taken during the ITT year to promote their retention.

Research plan

- It is desirable that potential early career leavers be identified at the earliest stage, during the ITT year.
- The study intends to inform this process by **surveying the feelings of individuals during their ITT year and then one year later during their NQT year.**

Research plan

- The first ITT questionnaire had already been completed in 2015 when the students were in their final year of training
- This dataset revealed common areas of dissatisfaction with the school experience during training, many relating to **strong feelings of being undervalued by school staff or university tutors, others to excessive workload.**
- Do these feelings carry on into the NQT year, and are they related to thoughts of leaving the job?

Research plan

- The second dataset addresses this and other questions with the aim of seeking to **identify signals of dissatisfaction early on during university training**, and introducing interventions during the training year that may promote later retention
- Research question:
 - Is it possible to identify NQTs who subsequently have thoughts about leaving the profession during their final training year?

Methodology

- Longitudinal study carried out over an 18 month period
- The method involves **statistically comparing two different datasets** in order to study factors that may influence teacher retention
- The first dataset is derived from an online questionnaire completed by 176 university primary ITT students in January 2015 that focused on their final School Experience (SE)
- Items interrogated their feelings about the relevance of university training to SE, the support they had received during SE, the quality of hands-on training organised by their school, and whether they considered the school to be a good placement.

Methodology

- The second dataset is based on a slightly different online questionnaire that was sent out to the same individuals who are now part-way through their NQT year, and be presented as a 'NQT mid-term evaluation'
- Most of the questions are parallel to those of the first questionnaire, although there is an additional section (Potential Early Leaver) enquiring whether during the NQT year they have seriously considered leaving the teaching profession, and if so, why.
- The questionnaire was submitted online using Survey Monkey

Analysis

- Analysis made **statistical comparisons between items in the Potential Early Leaver section and items from the previous ITT questionnaire.**
- Statistical operations included Pearson's correlation r , and Student's t test.

Potential implications

- The first questionnaire will later be administered to the upcoming PGCE cohort for 2016-17.
- These students **may make responses to the first questionnaire that indicate that they may be an early career leaver** (from the statistical links that may be established by the current research).
- Interventions will then be introduced for these students that will be devised to improve their retention

Instruments

Trainee questionnaire :
Overall satisfaction
score Q1
(48 items)

Mean	77.5
Standard Deviation	16.5
Range	61
Minimum	49
Maximum	110

NQT questionnaire :
Overall satisfaction
score Q2
(42 items)

Mean	67.7
Standard Deviation	21.2
Range	72
Minimum	48
Maximum	120

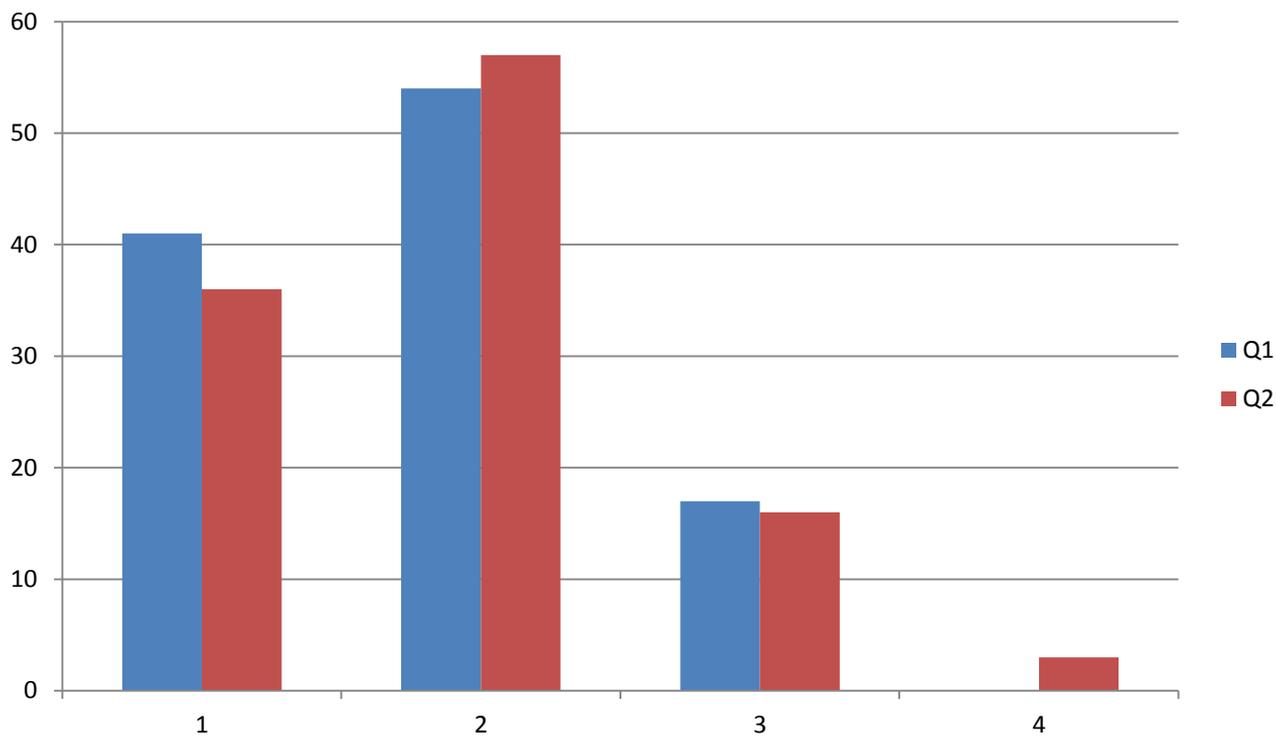
Scale reliability

Cronbach's alpha for Q1 = 0.89

Cronbach's alpha for Q2 = 0.95

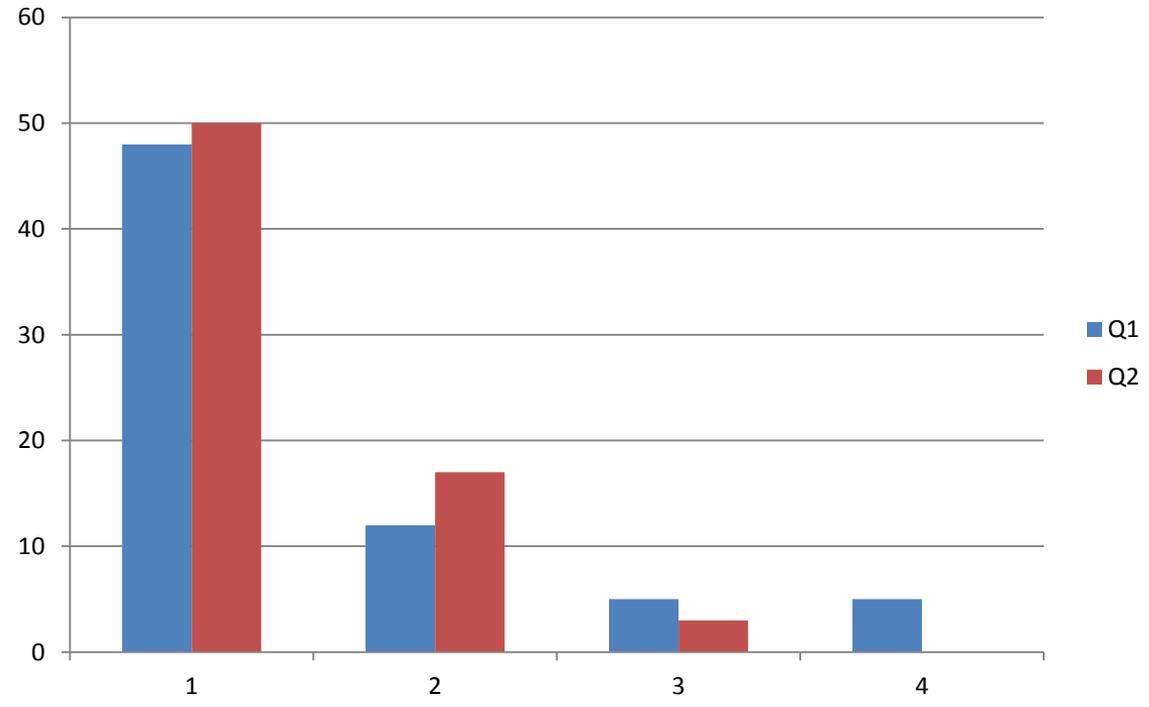
Section i/1 To what extent do you feel the University programme prepared you to meet the requirements of the Teachers' Standards for this placement?

Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils	Promote good progress and outcomes by pupils	Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge (including phonics)	Plan and teach well-structured lessons	Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils	Make accurate and productive use of assessment	Manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment	Fulfil wider professional responsibilities
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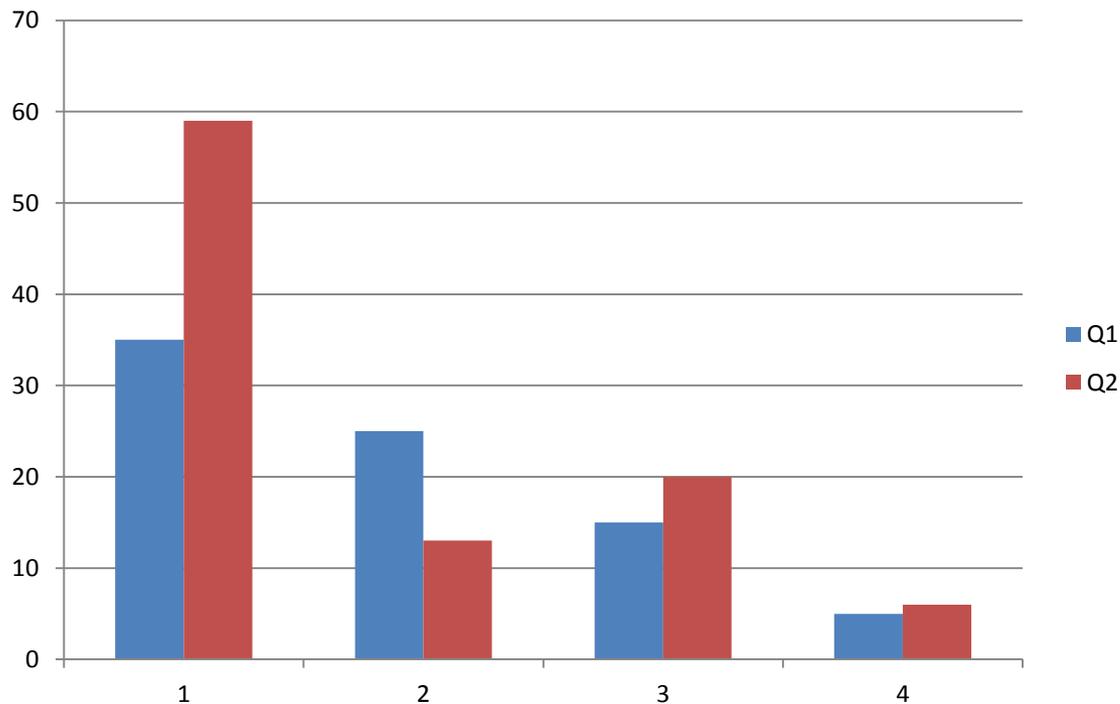
Section iii/2 To what extent do you agree with the following statements related to your experiences during the first week of your placement?

I met with the School-based Mentor in the first week of my placement	There was an adequate orientation that included fire regulations, health and safety issues, school policy and routines including safeguarding of pupils and e-safety	My mentor welcomed me, was friendly and approachable and treated me as an individual	My mentor provided me with opportunities to discuss my learning needs and share my areas of expertise/specialism	I was able to negotiate appropriate teaching opportunities with my Mentor/class teacher	I was able to negotiate appropriate teaching opportunities with other members of staff
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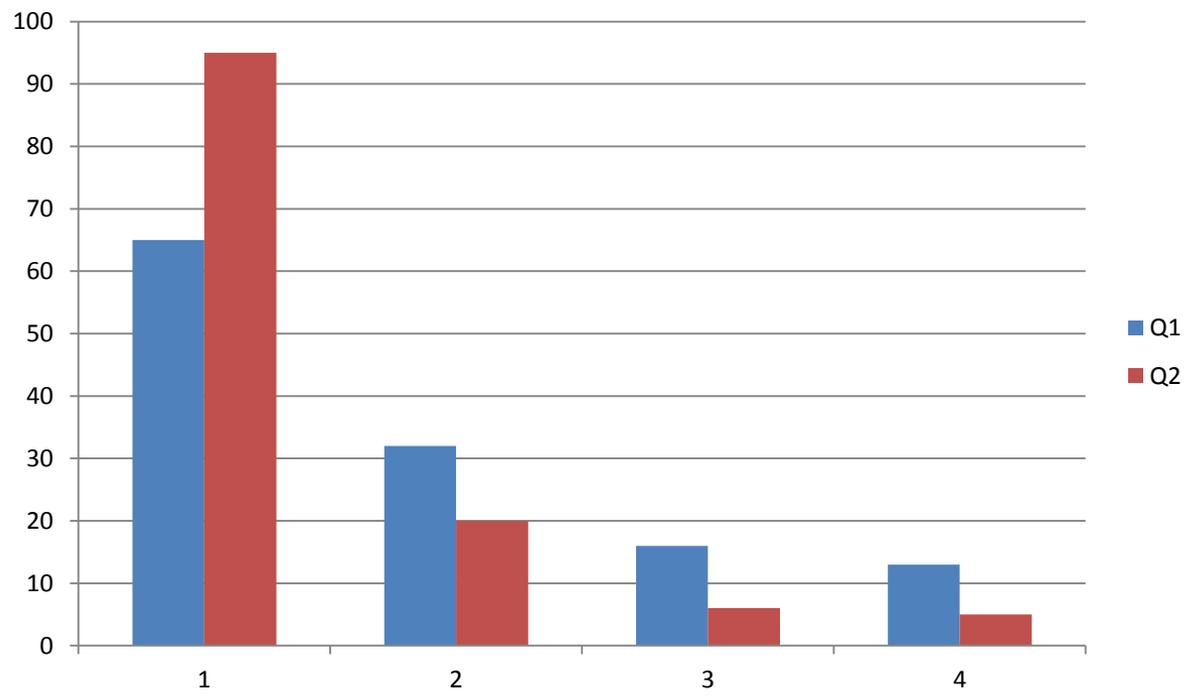
Section iv/3 To what extent do you agree with the following statements related to your experiences throughout this placement?

There were opportunities to observe skilled teachers throughout the school experience	I was exposed to a range of learning opportunities to help me meet my learning outcomes	I was able to implement the theory, skills and professional values I had gained in the class I was teaching	I received effective support for my lesson planning from my mentor/class teacher	I received effective support for my lesson planning from my University Liaison Tutor	This placement supported my subject knowledge development	This placement supported the development of my subject-specific pedagogy	This placement supported my development in using differentiation appropriately
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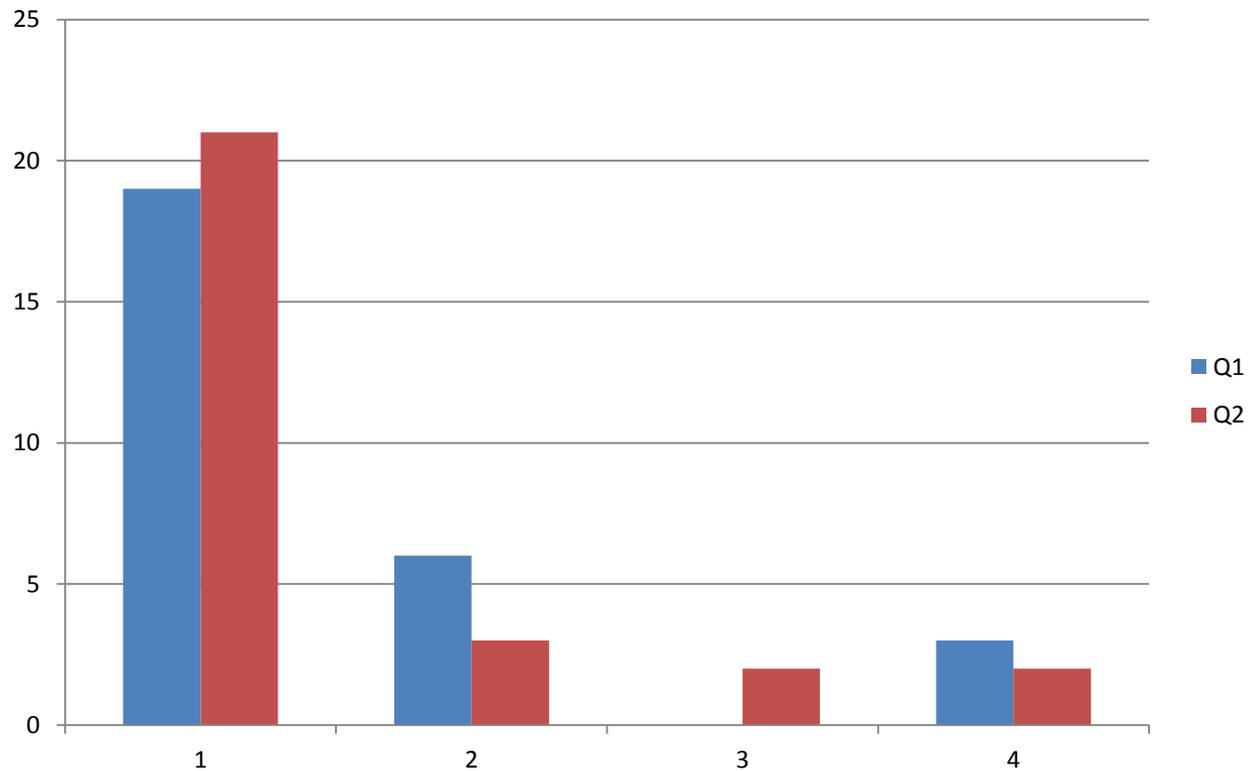
Section v/4 To what extent do you agree with the following statements related to feedback you received throughout this placement?

I received written feedback of observations of my teaching once a week	I met with the Mentor/classroom teacher once a week to discuss my progress	I received weekly written feedback on my progress which referenced the Teachers' Standards	My mentor/class teacher encouraged me to openly discuss any concerns I had relating to school experience	At the completion of this placement, I met with my Mentor/class teacher and University Liaison Tutor to discuss and record my progress against the Teachers' Standards	The mentor/classroom teacher attached great importance to my learning needs	The feedback I received from my mentor was constructive	I understood the feedback I received from my mentor	I understood the criteria for the awarding of grades for my final assessment
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Sector vii/5 To what extent do you agree with the following statements related to your overall experiences of this placement?

This school is a good placement for my learning and development as a teacher I felt a valued part of the school



Section 6 To what extent do you agree with the following statements related to your overall experiences?

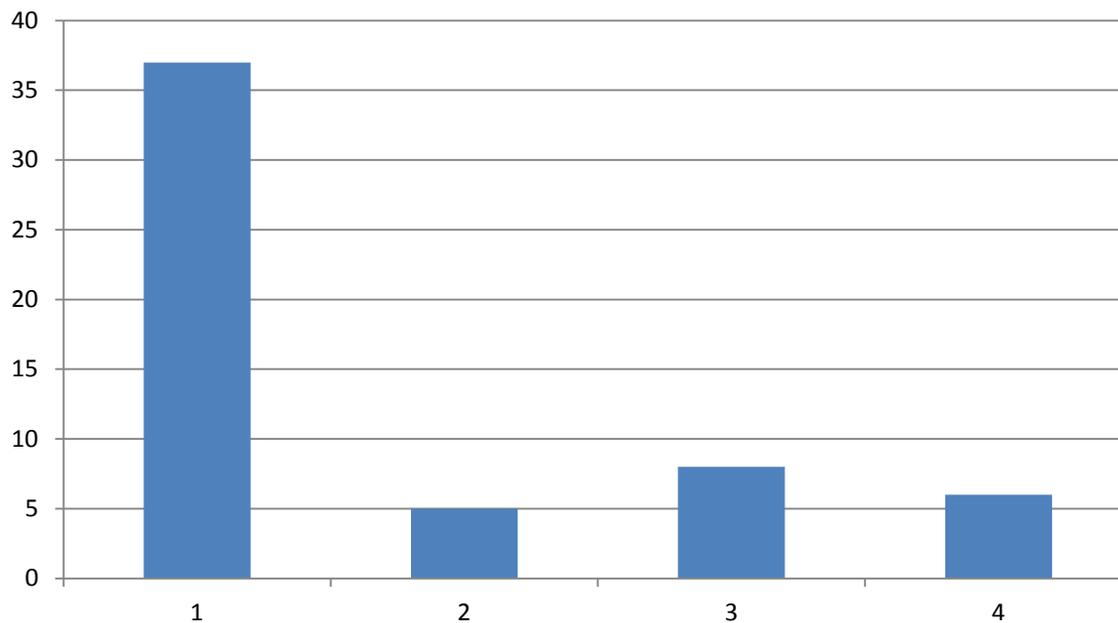
I plan to continue as a teacher at this school after completion of my NQT period

I have never considered leaving this school before completion of my NQT period

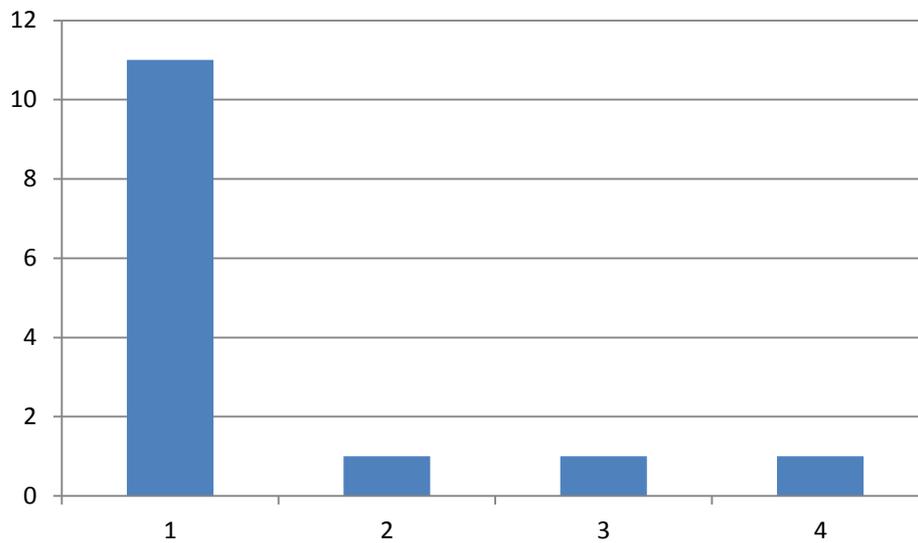
I plan to continue in the teaching profession after completion of my NQT period

I have never considered leaving the teaching profession since I became an NQT

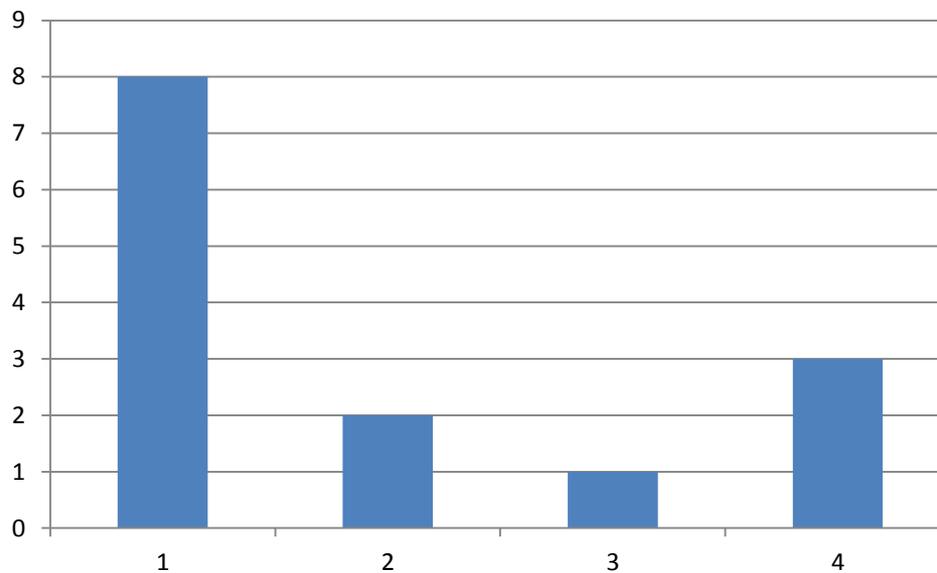
Q1



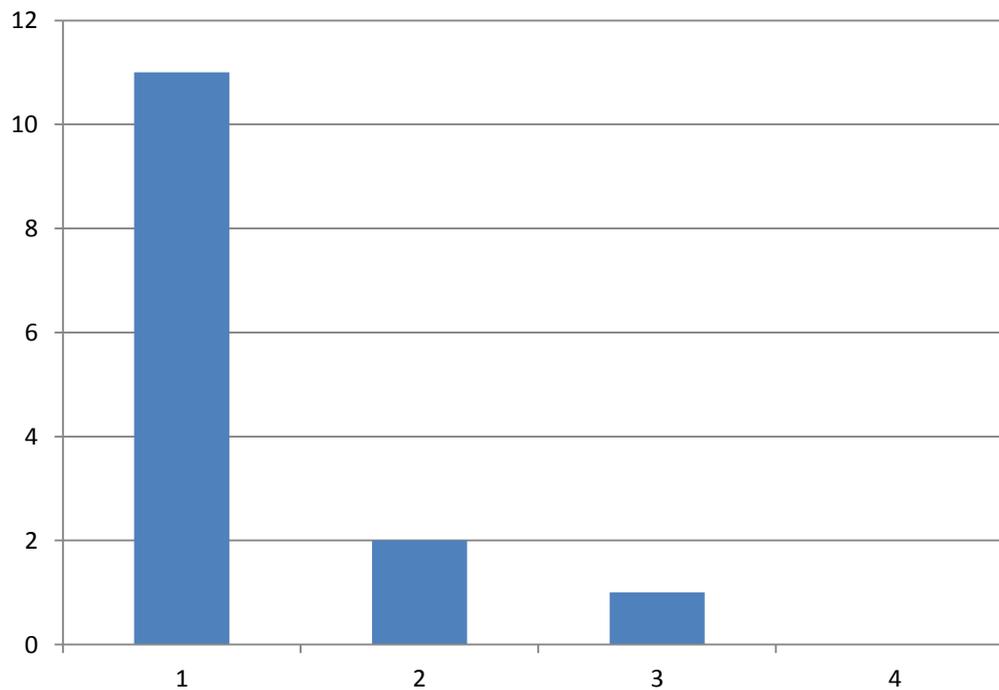
Item 11a I plan to continue as a teacher at this school after completion of my NQT period



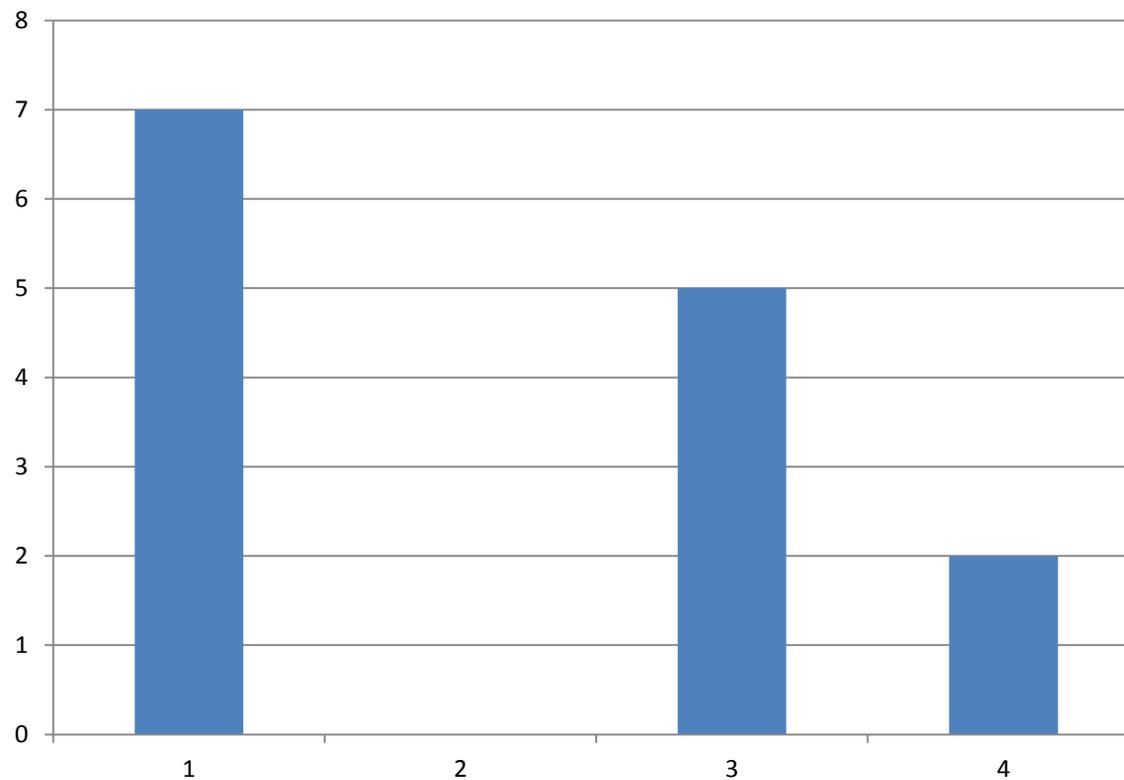
Item11b I have never considered leaving this school before completion
of my NQT period



Item 11c I plan to continue in the teaching profession after completion of my NQT period

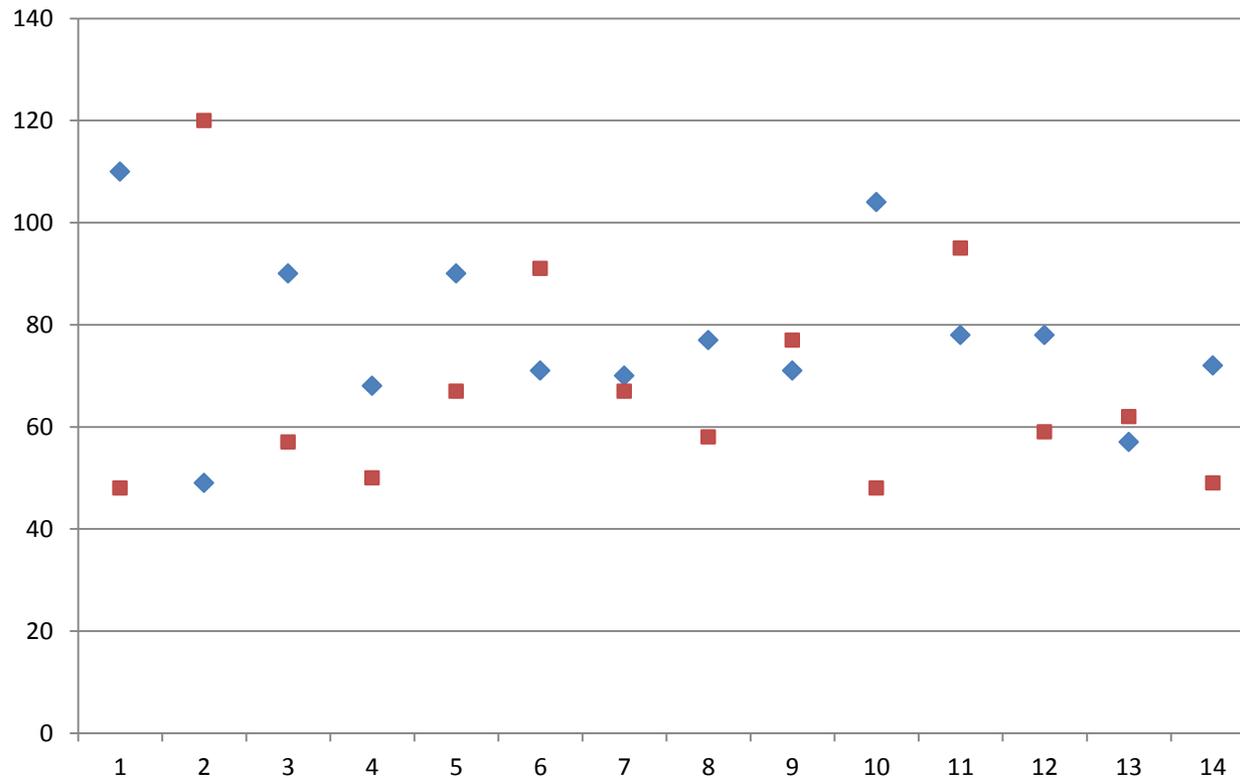


Item11d I have never considered leaving the teaching profession since I became an NQT



No statistical links between section 6 and any Q1 sections

Overall satisfaction scores Q1 vs. Q2



Statistically significant negative association between trainee satisfaction scores and NQT overall satisfaction scores ($r=0.5685$; $p < 0.05$).

Sally (110/48) Questionnaire 1

- Federated primary school; Sally was awarded grade 1
- *“We were not supported and only received negative comments about our teaching (being told in the first week that we would not get Outstanding in our practise). We were used as cover repeatedly, to the extent that I was always in the classroom on my own in the mornings and with a TA in the afternoon.”*
- *“I feel that the University could have stepped in more to help us with the issues. The school seemed unaware that we were not to be used for cover or that we required extra PPA.”*

Sally (110/48) Questionnaire 1

- *“My teacher/SBM only saw me teach a couple of times and she was doing jobs within the classroom on all of these occasions. I never felt welcome in the school and the Headteacher told us that we (students) should not sit together in the staffroom. I never received feedback on any lessons that I taught (apart from negative and snide comments when the teacher would glance at their book). I received regular comments about not being a real teacher and was repeatedly referred to as 'the student'.”*

Sally (110/48) Questionnaire 2

- Free school (year 5)
- *“The school is very supportive and accepting. The children are lovely and I really enjoy my job.”*

Rayette (49/120) Questionnaire 1

- Free school ; Rayette was awarded grade 1
- *“[My school] was the perfect place to start my teaching practice. The staff were all warm and welcoming and highly approachable. I look forward to carrying out my NQT year there in September! A massive thank you to my class teacher and SBM....who made sure that I received the necessary support and provided me with the opportunity to challenge myself and teach [whole] days/weeks at [this school]!”*

Rayette (49/120) Questionnaire 2

- Free school (year 6; same as her PGCE school)
- *“Pressure from SMT on pupil progress despite having the lowest class in my year group. Assessment demands from SMT although they themselves have no idea.”*

Lucy (104/48) Questionnaire 1

- LEA primary school. Lucy was awarded grade 1
- *“My teacher was a lovely person with great experience but had to help out in other areas of the school so I was left to cover for her. This was not her fault and if this hadn't been the case I believe she would have been far more hands on with my training. For this reason I would like to ask that this feedback is not shared with her as my child will be attending this school and I don't want there to be any future issues.”*

Lucy (104/48) Questionnaire 2

- LEA primary school (year 4)
- *“Ethos matches with mine and I have a genuine care for all of the children and their families in the school.”*

Julie (71/91) Questionnaire 2

- Independent school (reception); Julie was awarded grade 2 during training year
- *“A horrible, controlling Early Years Coordinator and no support from head or mentor to changes things in the team...I am not staying in the school.”*

Typical waverer (Q2)

- Had higher Q2 overall satisfaction scores (were less satisfied)*
- (Had numerically higher scores on nearly all Q2 items)
- Felt the university had not prepared them adequately to assess*
- Not been able to implement the theory, skills and professional values gained in the University*
- Subject-specific pedagogy had not been supported *
- Application of differentiation has not been supported *
- Current workload is unsustainable*

No individual Q1 items were associated with waverers to a statistically significant degree (although there were frequent large numerical differences)

Q1 section iv

There were opportunities to observe skilled teachers throughout the school experience	I was exposed to a range of learning opportunities to help me meet my learning outcomes	I was able to implement the theory, skills and professional values I had gained in the University in the class I was teaching	I received effective support for my lesson planning from my mentor/class teacher	I received effective support for my lesson planning from my University Liaison Tutor	This placement supported my subject knowledge development	This placement supported the development of my subject-specific pedagogy	This placement supported my development in using differentiation appropriately
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- There was a significant (negative) correlation between Q2 overall satisfaction score and Q1 section iv responses
- If students are confident about these aspects of their performance during the training placement, then this was a good predictor of future NQT dissatisfaction

Different interpretations of these data

- At a superficial level, high expectations → later disappointment (and *vice versa*); i.e. more reflective students are more realistic about their abilities
- Transition shock (Jesus & Paixao, 1996) – links to teacher resilience
- Burnout in teachers (Friedman, 2000)
- Overconfidence bias (Fruend & Kasten, 2011)

- (Interviews would be the next logical step)
- (Limitations of study)

Summary and implications

- It was not possible to identify waverers from Q1
- However, it was possible to identify from Q1 students who would later become dissatisfied during the NQT year
- Does the training year truly reflect the pressures of the NQT year?
- What would be the nature of possible interventions?

References

- Freund, P. A. & Kasten, N. (2011). How smart do you think you are? A meta-analysis on the validity of self-estimates of cognitive ability. *Psychological Bulletin* (American Psychological Association), 1-27.
- Friedman, I. A. (2000). Burnout in teachers: Shattered dreams of impeccable professional performance. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 56(5), 595-606.
- Jesus, S. N. & Paixao, M. P. (1996). The “reality shock” of the beginning teachers. Paper presented at The International Conference of Fedora, Ciombra, Portugal.