

Thomae, Manuela and Griffiths, Vivienne (2013) Early professional development and languages teaching in primary schools: Case studies of teachers trained on an employment based route. *Teacher Education Advancement Network Journal (TEAN)*, 5 (2). pp. 69-85.

Downloaded from: <http://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/1458/>

*Usage of any items from the University of Cumbria's institutional repository 'Insight' must conform to the following fair usage guidelines.*

Any item and its associated metadata held in the University of Cumbria's institutional repository Insight (unless stated otherwise on the metadata record) may be copied, displayed or performed, and stored in line with the JISC fair dealing guidelines (available [here](#)) for educational and not-for-profit activities

**provided that**

- the authors, title and full bibliographic details of the item are cited clearly when any part of the work is referred to verbally or in the written form
  - a hyperlink/URL to the original Insight record of that item is included in any citations of the work
- the content is not changed in any way
- all files required for usage of the item are kept together with the main item file.

**You may not**

- sell any part of an item
- refer to any part of an item without citation
- amend any item or contextualise it in a way that will impugn the creator's reputation
- remove or alter the copyright statement on an item.

The full policy can be found [here](#).

Alternatively contact the University of Cumbria Repository Editor by emailing [insight@cumbria.ac.uk](mailto:insight@cumbria.ac.uk).

**Early professional  
development and languages  
teaching in primary schools:  
Case studies of teachers  
trained on an employment-  
based route**

Teacher Education  
Network Journal  
Copyright © 2013  
University of Cumbria  
Vol 5 (2) pages 69-85

Manuela Thomae and Vivienne Griffiths  
[manuela.thomae@gmail.com](mailto:manuela.thomae@gmail.com)

**Abstract**

This article describes an Escalate-funded research project, which investigated the professional development of new primary teachers, trained on employment-based routes, in teaching modern foreign languages (MFL). Five universities in England providing the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) participated in our study. An online questionnaire assessed provision of training in modern foreign languages, and new teachers' knowledge and experience (n=210). Follow up interviews were carried out with 12 respondents and in-depth case studies were conducted in four primary schools. We found a basic proficiency in foreign languages (usually French) and generally low teaching confidence. The GTP training was evaluated favourably by almost all trainees, although the languages input, one day at most, was considered insufficient. The case studies revealed that some school environments are supportive of modern foreign languages teaching and provide language-rich environments. This enabled GTP-trained teachers to develop their professional expertise further. However, schools without a language-rich environment could inhibit this development. We conclude with some recommendations, especially relevant at a time when a new employment-based route, School Direct, is being introduced to take the place of the Graduate Teacher Programme.

**Keywords**

Professional development; modern foreign languages; language teaching; primary schools; Graduate Teacher Programme; trainee teachers; employment-based routes; work-based learning.

**Background to the research**

The research presented in this article is based on a one-year project, funded by Escalate, on work-based learning and primary languages (Griffiths, Tingey and Thomae, 2011). It builds on previous research by the project team (Cable, Driscoll, Mitchell et al., 2010; 2012; Griffiths, 2007, 2011) which explores teachers' professional development on the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) and modern foreign languages respectively.

**Citation:**

Thomae, M., Griffiths, V. (2013) 'Early professional development and languages teaching in primary schools: case studies of teachers trained on an employment-based route' *Teian Journal* 5 (2) July [Online]. Available at: <http://bit.ly/AtMwtr> (Accessed 04 July 2013).

## THOMAE & GRIFFITHS: EARLY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LANGUAGES TEACHING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: CASE STUDIES OF TEACHERS TRAINED ON AN EMPLOYMENT-BASED ROUTE

The project aimed to investigate the extent of training in modern foreign languages (MFL) on university-led, primary Graduate Teaching Programmes (GTP) and to highlight ways in which provision of MFL on employment-based routes can be enhanced at school or university. In particular, we were interested in exploring work-based learning factors, such as school context and school-based professional development opportunities, and identifying ways in which employing schools can best introduce or build on good practice in primary teachers' early careers.

### **Context**

#### *i) Employment-based routes into teaching: The Graduate Teacher Programme*

The Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) is an employment-based route into teaching in England, in which trainee teachers are employed by schools and learn alongside experienced teachers, usually in conjunction with university-led training. It is about to be replaced by School Direct, in which schools take a lead role, with a lesser involvement of higher education institutions, in spite of inspection findings which demonstrate that 'employment-based routes that have links with universities provide better training than those which do not' (Ofsted, 2010; Parliament, 2013). In addition, there has been little research on how GTP trainee teachers learn and develop a professional identity, (among the few studies are Griffiths, 2011; Mead, 2007, on professional values), which might have informed the development of new School Direct programmes.

The GTP is an intensive and demanding way into teaching, which can be highly effective for mature entrants to teaching, such as teaching assistants or career changers (Griffiths, 2007; Mayotte, 2003). It has attracted good candidates into teaching, including under-represented groups, although the route is less suitable for new graduates, with little prior school or work experience (see Foster, 2000, 2002; Smith and McLay, 2007). Professional development opportunities are often very good and the training is consistently better in primary than secondary schools (Ofsted, 2007). However, the effectiveness of GTP provision depends to a great extent on the quality of schools and teachers involved (e.g., Brookes, 2005). A high degree of variability has been found in the provision and the quality of teaching achieved by the trainees, which is directly related to the quality of training (Ofsted, 2007).

As there is a lack of subject-focused research and evidence on employment-based routes into teaching, we considered modern foreign languages as a suitable focus for a study of work-based learning in schools.

#### *ii) Modern foreign languages in primary schools*

Young people, schools and large parts of the working population in the UK are behind the rest of Europe in terms of language capabilities (Council of the European Union (CEU), 2009; CILT, 2009a; Tinsley & Board, 2013). The statutory requirement to introduce languages in Key Stage 2 (7-11

### **Citation:**

Thomae, M., Griffiths, V. (2013) 'Early professional development and languages teaching in primary schools: case studies of teachers trained on an employment-based route' *Tean Journal* 5 (2) July [Online]. Available at: <http://bit.ly/AtMwtr> (Accessed 04 July 2013).

## THOMAE & GRIFFITHS: EARLY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LANGUAGES TEACHING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: CASE STUDIES OF TEACHERS TRAINED ON AN EMPLOYMENT-BASED ROUTE

year-olds) from 2010 (DfES, 2005) aimed to increase language diversity and intercultural awareness through focused MFL teaching in primary schools as well as integrated language approaches (Griffiths and Driscoll, 2010; LACE, 2007). More than two thirds of UK primary schools received training in how to teach languages by 2008 (Driscoll, 2011), often in conjunction with local secondary schools. Over the last decade, great progress has been made, with one in four primary schools offering some (usually European) language teaching by 2009 (Wade & Marshall, 2009). Latest information from a survey of 3,000 state schools (Tinsley & Board, 2013) indicates that 97% of all primary schools in England provide at least some language teaching to 7-11 year-olds, although there is considerable variation between schools in terms of the quality of that provision (Tinsley & Board, 2013).

However, ongoing issues include a lack of good language models and specialist MFL teachers (Driscoll, 2011) and a lack of knowledge and confidence in generalist primary teachers (Cable et al., 2010, 2012), exacerbated by funding cuts (Tinsley & Board, 2013). In particular, teachers in the UK feel unprepared to help pupils develop intercultural awareness (LACE, 2007). The picture of initial training in modern foreign languages for teachers is mixed, with some good quality training but often limited opportunities for trainee teachers to observe good teaching (Cable et al., 2010, 2012; Ofsted, 2008). An additional issue is that funding for the bilateral exchange programme, which enabled trainee teachers to develop language skills and awareness overseas, was cut (Driscoll & Rowe, 2012), thus undermining the importance of intercultural awareness. Nevertheless, there are optimistic signs:

Headteachers are finding ways of combining specialist and non-specialist expertise in innovative ways so that the professional community of practice of language teachers is expanding  
(Driscoll, 2011, p.230).

The future of funding for modern foreign languages is still uncertain, although recent proposals for a new primary curriculum include a requirement to teach one or more of seven foreign languages at key stage 2 (DfE, 2013). These include European languages such as French, German and Spanish, as well as Mandarin and classical languages. Prescribed languages have been included, despite two thirds of the consultation respondents opposing the proposed list (Ratcliffe, 2013) and the omission of community languages (ibid.).

### **Research and Methodology**

The study employed a mixed methods approach, enabling us to collect and analyse data on primary GTP and school languages provision, as well as exploring participants' experiences of the primary GTP and school languages provision. Following a pilot study, we approached universities

### **Citation:**

Thomae, M., Griffiths, V. (2013) 'Early professional development and languages teaching in primary schools: case studies of teachers trained on an employment-based route' *Tean Journal* 5 (2) July [Online]. Available at: <http://bit.ly/AtMwtr> (Accessed 04 July 2013).

THOMAE & GRIFFITHS: EARLY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND  
LANGUAGES TEACHING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: CASE STUDIES OF  
TEACHERS TRAINED ON AN EMPLOYMENT-BASED ROUTE

offering the primary GTP in different regions of England, via the GTP leaders. Five universities agreed to participate in the study. Primary GTP trainees and GTP-trained early career primary teachers (first to third year of teaching), who had trained at these universities since 2007, were invited to complete an online survey about their initial training and experiences of teaching modern foreign languages. We collected the questionnaire data, either online using the Bristol Online Survey facilities, or directly at three providers using a paper and pencil questionnaire, in order to maximise responses. 160 GTP trainees and 50 GTP-trained early career teachers (n=210) responded to the questionnaire (see Appendix 1). We also carried out follow up interviews with those primary GTP trainees and GTP-trained early career primary teachers willing to take further part in the research (n=12). Seven interviews were conducted by telephone and five via email due to timing and availability constraints for the GTP trainees (as also found in Griffiths, 2011). In total, we interviewed nine GTP trainees and three GTP-trained teachers. For a breakdown by GTP provider, see Table 1.

**Table 1.** Primary GTP trainees and primary GTP-trained teachers by provider.

| <b>GTP Provider</b> | <b>Female GTP trainees</b> | <b>Male GTP trainees</b> | <b>Female GTP-trained teachers</b> | <b>Male GTP-trained teachers</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|---------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Provider 1          | 2                          | 2                        | 2                                  | 0                                | 6            |
| Provider 2          | 0                          | 1                        | 0                                  | 0                                | 1            |
| Provider 3          | 2                          | 0                        | 0                                  | 0                                | 2            |
| Provider 4          | 1                          | 0                        | 0                                  | 0                                | 1            |
| Provider 5          | 1                          | 0                        | 1                                  | 0                                | 2            |
| <b>Total</b>        | 6                          | 3                        | 3                                  | 0                                | <b>12</b>    |

Four in-depth case studies were carried out, consisting of visits to schools employing GTP-trained primary teachers. We conducted interviews with MFL coordinators and head teachers, and some observation of the GTP-trained primary teachers as appropriate, to collect further evidence of languages teaching and GTP-trained primary teachers' impact on their pupils learning and the school environment. All four GTP-trained primary teachers whom we observed were female and all school visits took place in November 2011. In addition, we interviewed six GTP language tutors from the five universities.

All trainees and teachers involved in the study received explanatory information about the research, including assurances about confidentiality and anonymity. They were free to withdraw from the study at any point and for any reason, which none of the respondents chose to do.

**Citation:**

Thomae, M., Griffiths, V. (2013) 'Early professional development and languages teaching in primary schools: case studies of teachers trained on an employment-based route' *Tean Journal* 5 (2) July [Online]. Available at: <http://bit.ly/AtMwtr> (Accessed 04 July 2013).

THOMAE & GRIFFITHS: EARLY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND  
LANGUAGES TEACHING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: CASE STUDIES OF  
TEACHERS TRAINED ON AN EMPLOYMENT-BASED ROUTE

School A is a first school operating within a three-tier system in the Midlands. The school has 422 children from reception to Year 4 and 20 teachers. Most of the children are white British. The school is not involved in GTP training but does train PGCE students. The GTP-trained teacher received her initial training at a different local school and had been at school A for three years.

School B is a small village school in south east England. The school takes in 104 pupils aged 5 – 11 years and there are five teachers. There is 1 ½ form entry divided into four mixed-age classes: Reception, Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, Years 5 and 6. The GTP-trained teacher received her initial training at this school and had been teaching at the school on and off for approximately two years. Owing to some time on a temporary contract, she was still classified as a newly qualified teacher (NQT) and was completing her induction programme.

School C is an all-through primary school with 400 children, in a largely middle class area near a large town in the Thames Valley. 27 languages (mainly Arabic and Asian community languages such as Urdu and Gujarati) are represented in the school. Some children are multilingual, speaking two or three community languages as well as fluent English. According to the head teacher, there are high expectations from parents and the children are high achievers. The school offers placements to PGCE students and second placement experiences to GTP trainees. The GTP-trained teacher had been at the school for four years: one as a teaching assistant, one during her GTP training and two years as a trained teacher. School D is a primary school in a small coastal town in south east England, with high levels of deprivation. It has trained five GTP trainees over the past ten years but the current GTP-trained NQT received her training at a different school. The school has 370 children in 14 classes, including a very small proportion of children with English as an additional language (EAL). Forty-three percent of the children at the school receive free school meals, although a higher proportion of children qualify for receiving them.

We analysed the data from the online survey quantitatively, using on-line survey tools, and through scrutiny and coding of open-ended, qualitative data. Interview and case study data were coded thematically by the first author and coding was cross-checked by the second author and other team members.

### **Findings**

The following sections focus on aspects of GTP trainees' and teachers' language subject knowledge; the GTP training and early teaching experiences; and the school contexts for modern foreign languages, with particular emphasis on GTP-trained teachers' professional development. Questionnaire and interview data will be discussed briefly, with main

### **Citation:**

Thomae, M., Griffiths, V. (2013) 'Early professional development and languages teaching in primary schools: case studies of teachers trained on an employment-based route' *Tean Journal* 5 (2) July [Online]. Available at: <http://bit.ly/AtMwtr> (Accessed 04 July 2013).

THOMAE & GRIFFITHS: EARLY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND  
LANGUAGES TEACHING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: CASE STUDIES OF  
TEACHERS TRAINED ON AN EMPLOYMENT-BASED ROUTE

reference to the case study school data. All data have been anonymised to protect the participants' identities.

*i) Foreign language proficiency and confidence to teach*

From the questionnaire data, we found that just under three quarters (73%) of the survey sample had at least basic knowledge of two or more languages (up to GCSE), while approximately one quarter (27%) spoke only English. For example, just over half of the questionnaire respondents had at least basic knowledge of French (51%). Non-European languages spoken by the study participants included Urdu, Punjabi, Arabic, Japanese and Chinese. These findings are similar to those in Tinsley and Board (2013).

In terms of the interviewees, the trainees'/teachers' language skills seemed not only to depend on formal training in their educational career but also on training sought out of personal interest and motivation. Some of the trainees/teachers had formal language qualifications, others undertook training without a formal qualification; sometimes both applied, as in the following:

*'I did French at secondary school but I didn't take it as a GCSE so it kind of stopped when I was about 14 I think... but Spanish I took lessons as an adult, I went to evening classes for a period of time and I feel more comfortable with that because I have had probably longer tuition.'*

Many of the GTP trainees and teachers did not feel confident in delivering MFL in the classroom (see also Cable et al., 2012), often explaining this lack of confidence with a lack of foreign language proficiency (as in Tinsley & Board, 2013); for example, one said:

*'I'm really paranoid about it because I can't speak the language...French that we do at my primary school. I'm very aware and conscious of how I pronounce.'*

Yet, several of the interviewees also reported high levels of MFL teaching confidence, especially when they felt that they were sufficiently proficient in the target language (usually French) to teach it to the level required at key stage 2.

*ii) Training on the GTP and early experiences of MFL teaching in primary schools*

All those surveyed reported that their primary GTP training on languages consisted of either a full or a half day input by specialist MFL tutors. The quality of this training was considered good by all the trainees who responded to the questionnaire and many cited the inspiring nature of the workshops, which promoted enthusiasm for teaching languages and

**Citation:**

Thomae, M., Griffiths, V. (2013) 'Early professional development and languages teaching in primary schools: case studies of teachers trained on an employment-based route' *Tean Journal* 5 (2) July [Online]. Available at: <http://bit.ly/AtMwtr> (Accessed 04 July 2013).

THOMAE & GRIFFITHS: EARLY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND  
LANGUAGES TEACHING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: CASE STUDIES OF  
TEACHERS TRAINED ON AN EMPLOYMENT-BASED ROUTE

provided useful initial ideas and resources. However, the languages tutors themselves considered the time available to be completely inadequate, and could only provide the GTP trainees a 'taster' of modern foreign languages rather than a foundation for languages teaching (see also Ofsted, 2008). Due to the intensity of the GTP training, only optional, independent follow up tasks were set (in three of the universities), such as looking up the suggested resources.

This brief introduction was supplemented by varied experiences of primary GTP trainees observing colleagues teach language lessons to pupils in schools; for example:

*'I have seen a few sessions in my own school, one by the MFL Leader. She was very confident and delivered a fabulous lesson.'*

Others did not observe languages being taught, but some of these were expected to undertake some teaching, for instance, integrating MFL into daily routines, such as calling the register, despite languages not being formally timetabled.

*iii) Primary school contexts for modern foreign languages*

As well as the variation between GTP contexts, school environments experienced by the interviewees varied widely. While in some primary schools modern foreign languages were not part of the curriculum and/or depended solely on the individual teacher's initiative, in other schools the environment was largely supportive of implementing MFL teaching, even as early as at reception stage (see also Cable et al., 2012; Tinsley & Board, 2013). Unsurprisingly, this diversity of approaches had an impact on the early career teachers' professional development.

For example, at school D many children had social as well as learning and language difficulties. Some children entered school not speaking English, despite the proportion of EAL children being very low. Therefore, the school employed two speech and language assistants who were fully timetabled and had links with speech and language clinics. Given children's difficulties in the core subjects and their poor English language skills, subjects like music and French were temporarily 'sitting on the backburner' (Deputy head); although the school did have subject coordinators who received teaching release to promote these subjects, which could provide a 'level playing field' for children with language and learning difficulties.

A number of interviewees reported using language skills available from pupils in their classes and the parents, initiating school visits by non-English parents to support the learning of cultural and language aspects and relying on children who were native speakers of a foreign language (similar to findings by Driscoll, 2011). However, in general the primary

**Citation:**

Thomae, M., Griffiths, V. (2013) 'Early professional development and languages teaching in primary schools: case studies of teachers trained on an employment-based route' *Tean Journal* 5 (2) July [Online]. Available at: <http://bit.ly/AtMwtr> (Accessed 04 July 2013).



THOMAE & GRIFFITHS: EARLY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND  
LANGUAGES TEACHING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: CASE STUDIES OF  
TEACHERS TRAINED ON AN EMPLOYMENT-BASED ROUTE

curriculum was perceived as packed and modern foreign languages easily fell off the agenda (see Griffiths and Driscoll, 2010). In addition, many interviewees referred to the fact that they were teaching children in reception classes or key stage 1 and that at this stage, MFL was not considered a curriculum priority. As a major priority in many schools was teaching and reaching targets in the core subjects, MFL could tend to be squeezed out of the timetable.

For instance, the head teacher of school A emphasised the importance of the core subjects for teaching and learning. According to her, the focus on basic skills was really important and there was the danger that, with the development of the creative curriculum, some schools could lose focus on the core subjects. She thought that inadequate provision of basic skills in literacy, numeracy, ICT and science would be doing the children a disservice. In addition, she stressed that it was mainly about striking the right balance: the children in her school were very confident, creative and expressive and some children did not excel in the core subjects but in other subjects. Yet, she explained, the focus on the core subjects needed to be maintained because they provided the underpinning skills for all of the children in other areas and the results in core subjects were the results on which schools would be judged.

Nevertheless, amongst the interviewees and case study teachers, several did experience timetabled MFL teaching. This teaching tended to be covered by specialists or externals, although some GTP-trained teachers were expected to take a regular lesson and use additional integrated approaches:

*'We do a half an hour French lesson every week. I take the register in French and sometimes I add some Spanish.'*

Several interviewees and case study teachers reported language-rich school environments (see Cable et al., 2012; Griffiths and Driscoll, 2010). For example, in School C there is a Spanish day and a French day which, as the head teacher explained, enhances provision and links to the wider curriculum in terms of traditions, culture, food and music. There are also French and Spanish assemblies for the parents. In Year 6, there is a French breakfast to which parents are also invited. Year 6 pupils serve breakfast of orange juice and croissants to the whole school; each class has a day and the hall becomes a café.

In other cases, rather than a school-wide approach, the introduction of MFL in the classroom depended on a particular teacher's own interest and initiative. For example, the GTP-trained teacher at school B was completing her NQT year and teaching French at Key Stages 1 and 2. She had a formal qualification at GCSE level in French, but felt that she had largely improved her French skills during repeated visits to France, as well

**Citation:**

Thomae, M., Griffiths, V. (2013) 'Early professional development and languages teaching in primary schools: case studies of teachers trained on an employment-based route' *Tean Journal* 5 (2) July [Online]. Available at: <http://bit.ly/AtMwtr> (Accessed 04 July 2013).

THOMAE & GRIFFITHS: EARLY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND  
LANGUAGES TEACHING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: CASE STUDIES OF  
TEACHERS TRAINED ON AN EMPLOYMENT-BASED ROUTE

as undertaking additional training with two external specialists. She described her teaching approach with the children as interactive and taught each class for 35 to 40 minutes following a scheme of work, which she often developed herself. She helped the children's pronunciation through games and listening activities and sometimes used assessments within lessons. Other teachers in the school followed up on her lessons by using French in integrated activities such as calling the register. This teacher had a passion for teaching languages and believed that children who may not be as good in the core subjects could find a successful outlet in languages. She felt that languages gave children enthusiasm for something that they could take forward in life and provided less successful children with an opportunity to shine. She had been earmarked to become the school's MFL coordinator once she had completed her NQT year and was already responsible for all the discrete French teaching as well as the organisation of resources in the school. The above example of School B is interesting because the NQT not only brought prior knowledge of French to her teaching, albeit originally at a fairly low level, but this was supplemented by further training external to the school as well as visits to France. Her prior experiences, coupled with her enthusiasm for languages, enabled her to take a lead role in languages at her school. Thus in her case, language teaching skills could not be related to the GTP or learning in the school context, but were largely due to her own interest and commitment to languages. However, we were concerned that someone with such limited experience was going to be given a lead responsibility for languages in the school after only one full year of teaching. This is quite a common experience for GTP-trained teachers (see Griffiths, 2007, 2011), and we wondered how far this teacher would be able to sustain her enthusiasm and progress in her own languages teaching, let alone lead others to do so, without further substantial training and support. The lack of models of good MFL teaching in the school were likely to limit her professional development (see also Cable *et al.*, 2012; Ofsted, 2008).

In the following contrasting case study, we see how school C introduced languages from an early age and used languages teaching as the basis for teachers' professional development. This school had a multilingual environment, in which the majority of pupils spoke a wide range of community languages (see also CILT, 2005, 2009b) and languages were introduced from the Reception class upwards. Visiting specialists taught Spanish in Key Stage 1 and French in Key Stage 2, paid for out of the school budget. The head teacher considered it important that class teachers sat in on and observed expert role models teaching, so that they learnt alongside the children and could gradually take over some of the teaching. She was committed to languages as vital for the children, as she told us:

**Citation:**

Thomae, M., Griffiths, V. (2013) 'Early professional development and languages teaching in primary schools: case studies of teachers trained on an employment-based route' *Tean Journal* 5 (2) July [Online]. Available at: <http://bit.ly/AtMwtr> (Accessed 04 July 2013).

THOMAE & GRIFFITHS: EARLY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND  
LANGUAGES TEACHING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: CASE STUDIES OF  
TEACHERS TRAINED ON AN EMPLOYMENT-BASED ROUTE

The children are very motivated and enjoy the languages enormously. Languages broaden their experience and tune them into other cultures. The EAL children make very good progress in languages – [they are] outstanding and achieve higher overall than the white children. The specialist teachers used mainly oral, interactive approaches, including songs and games, carefully building children's knowledge about language through a phonics-based approach. From our observations, the children clearly enjoyed these lessons and were confident about speaking the languages. Lessons were reinforced by class displays and interactive whiteboard activities, which encouraged reading. The specialist teachers also prepared lesson plans which the teachers could follow in between their visits. As well as separate lessons, class teachers also used Spanish or French to take the register, line children up and at the beginning and end of the day.

The GTP-trained teacher, who had French and German at GCSE level, had no languages input on the GTP as she trained before languages were included, but she learnt from observing French being taught in all three schools where she undertook her GTP. Since qualifying, she had taken part in the weekly lessons by the visiting French teacher – 'The children love it...they grow in confidence and are very language aware' – had taken two courses led by the same specialist and had a week-long visit to Toronto, where she visited eight schools and saw French being used to teach a range of subjects. In 2010 she took a Year 4 class and got to the stage where she was taking the French lesson every other week. At the time of our visit she was teaching Year 5, so she was observing the specialist teacher again in order to build higher level vocabulary and approaches.

For GTP-trained teachers, as in the above example, who may have had little or no languages input during the course, such in-service provision is vital as a way of introducing approaches to teaching MFL as well as improving their own knowledge about languages in a multilingual environment (see CILT, 2005, 2009b; Ofsted, 2008). We thought this was an excellent model of professional development and building expertise in teaching modern foreign languages; but it was largely dependent on the head teacher's commitment to MFL (as in Driscoll, 2011) and the continuing professional development of her staff and as such may be vulnerable in the long term.

We found from the case study data that it was not only the school contexts and attitudes of head teachers in relation to the primary curriculum that mattered with reference to the teaching of modern foreign languages, but also the wider network of families and society. For instance, School D was in a very deprived area of the UK; in fact it was based in one of the poorest areas within Europe. According to the acting deputy head teacher, the school often needed to deal with social problems

**Citation:**

Thomae, M., Griffiths, V. (2013) 'Early professional development and languages teaching in primary schools: case studies of teachers trained on an employment-based route' *Tean Journal* 5 (2) July [Online]. Available at: <http://bit.ly/AtMwtr> (Accessed 04 July 2013).

before focussing on children's learning. A large proportion of the children in school D had not travelled far beyond their home town and many of the children did not have an understanding of how close France was to the South East of England. Many families could not afford to travel and the school had temporarily stopped school trips to ease the financial burden on the parents. This severely reduced the opportunities for widening cultural awareness that a visit to France might have provided (Driscoll, 2011) and limited their access to a broader international context.

### **Discussion and recommendations**

In terms of the experiences of GTP-trained teachers in learning and teaching modern foreign languages in primary schools, we have identified a mixed picture, which depended largely on the interaction between prior experience, enthusiasm and a supportive school context. Although GTP training itself was regarded positively by our respondents, its brevity could not by itself provide a sufficient basis for modern foreign language teaching or maintain GTP-trained teachers' interest. Generally, the GTP-trained teachers' knowledge of foreign languages was basic and their teaching confidence correspondingly low (as in Ofsted, 2008). Almost all trainees evaluated the GTP training favourably, although the maximum input on languages of one day was considered insufficient.

Recommendations provided by the GTP trainees and GTP-trained teachers in our sample included the need for more language training and more contact with MFL specialists/opportunities to observe high quality language teaching, in line with recommendations from other studies (see also Cable et al., 2010, 2012). Other trainees suggested opportunities for approaching their university to specifically request teaching observation in schools that are known for having good practice in language teaching. Such opportunities were already taking place in some contexts. Because of the centrality of work-based learning on the GTP, much depended on trainees being employed by primary schools in which languages were flourishing, together with in-school learning and further external training. As we have seen from the data, some primary school environments are supportive of modern foreign languages teaching, providing good opportunities for GTP-trained teachers to develop further skills in languages increasing their confidence and enabling them to make a positive contribution to, and impact on, languages teaching in their schools. However, schools where MFL teaching is not prioritised, or where specialist teachers are lacking, can inhibit such development (Ofsted, 2008).

In a few cases, such as the NQT in school B who was playing a lead role in modern foreign languages in her school, GTP-trained teachers' expertise in, or commitment to, languages actually led to the introduction of MFL in their schools. In these cases the GTP teacher's impact was therefore considerable, but was likely to be harder to sustain without an existing

### **Citation:**

Thomae, M., Griffiths, V. (2013) 'Early professional development and languages teaching in primary schools: case studies of teachers trained on an employment-based route' *Tean Journal* 5 (2) July [Online]. Available at: <http://bit.ly/AtMwtr> (Accessed 04 July 2013).

THOMAE & GRIFFITHS: EARLY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND  
LANGUAGES TEACHING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: CASE STUDIES OF  
TEACHERS TRAINED ON AN EMPLOYMENT-BASED ROUTE

infrastructure for languages in schools (see also Cable et al., 2012). Such contexts also severely limited the opportunities for those teachers to develop further expertise (Griffiths, 2011).

Recommendations to improve employment-based programmes, such as the newly developing School Direct, must therefore include more opportunities to observe good MFL teaching, better communication between training providers and schools, and more direct training in both contexts. These project findings have been built into revisions of our own GTP, and recommendations from the GTP trainees, teachers and their schools will be used to spark a wider dialogue on how to improve the role of modern foreign languages within employment-based routes into teaching, which we consider particularly important in the light of current policy changes and the introduction of School Direct.

### References

- Brookes, W. (2005) The Graduate Teacher Programme in England: mentor training, quality assurance and the findings of inspection. *Journal of In-Service Education*, 31(1), 43–62.
- Cable, C., Driscoll, P., Mitchell, R., Sing, S., Cremin, T., Earl, J., Eyres, I., Holmes, B., Martin, C. and Heins, B. (2010) Language learning at Key Stage 2: a longitudinal study. Research report no.198. (London, DCSF). Available online at: <http://oro.open.ac.uk/20630/> (accessed 04 July 2013).
- Cable, C., Driscoll, P., Mitchell, R., Sing, S., Cremin, T., Earl, J., Eyres, I., Holmes, B., Martin, C. and Heins, B. (2012) Language learning at Key Stage 2: findings from a longitudinal study. *Education 3-13*, 40 (4), 1-16.
- CILT (2005) Language trends 2005: community language learning in England, Wales and Scotland (London, The National Centre for Languages).
- CILT (2009a) One million pound project to tackle languages skills gap. Available online at: [http://www.cilt.org.uk/home/news/news\\_items/language\\_skills\\_gap.aspx](http://www.cilt.org.uk/home/news/news_items/language_skills_gap.aspx) (accessed on 10 April 2013).
- CILT (2009b) Languages spoken in the UK population. *Community Languages*, 24, 8-9.
- Council of the European Union (2009) Council resolution on a European strategy for multilingualism (Brussels, CEU).
- DfE (Department for Education) (2013) Consultation report: foreign languages at Key Stage 2 (London, DfE).
- DfES (Department for Education and Skills) (2005) Key Stage 2 framework for languages (London, DfES).
- Driscoll, P. (2011) An introduction to primary languages in P. Driscoll, A. Lambirth & J. Roden (eds), *The primary curriculum: a creative approach* (London, Sage).

### Citation:

Thomae, M., Griffiths, V. (2013) 'Early professional development and languages teaching in primary schools: case studies of teachers trained on an employment-based route' *Tean Journal* 5 (2) July [Online]. Available at: <http://bit.ly/AtMwtr> (Accessed 04 July 2013).

THOMAE & GRIFFITHS: EARLY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND  
LANGUAGES TEACHING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: CASE STUDIES OF  
TEACHERS TRAINED ON AN EMPLOYMENT-BASED ROUTE

- Driscoll, P. & Rowe, J. (2012) Broadening the lens: an investigation of student teachers' changing perceptions of pedagogy following a teaching placement in a primary school in mainland Europe. *Education 3-13* 40(4), pp.1-16.
- Foster, R. (2000) The Graduate Teacher Programme: just the job? *Journal of In-Service Education*, 26(2), 297-309.
- Foster, R.(2002) The graduate teacher route to QTS: motorway, by-way or by-pass? Available online at:  
<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00001933.htm> (accessed 14 May 2013).
- Griffiths, V. (2007) Experiences of training on an employment-based route into teaching in England. *Journal of In-Service Education*, 33(1) 107-123.
- Griffiths, V. (2011) Career changers and fast-track induction: teacher perspectives on their early professional development. *Teacher Development*, 15(1) 19-35.
- Griffiths, V. and Driscoll, P. (2010) Languages, diversity and communities: language learning policies and primary practice in England, in C. Govaris & S. Kaldi (Eds) *Intercultural Education in Europe* (Berlin, Waxmann), 37-56.
- Griffiths, V., Tingey, C. and Thomae, M. (2011) An investigation into the impact and effectiveness of beginning and early career primary teachers, trained on a work-based learning route, in the delivery of primary languages at Key Stage 2. Report to Funders (Canterbury, Canterbury Christ Church University). Available online at:  
<http://escalate.ac.uk/downloads/8673.pdf> (accessed 04 July 2013).
- LACE (Languages and Cultures in Europe) (2007) The intercultural competences developed in compulsory foreign language education in the European Union. Available online at:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/doc/lace\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/doc/lace_en.pdf) (accessed on 22 May 2013).
- Mayotte, G.A. (2003) Stepping stones to success: previously developed career competencies and their benefits to career switchers transitioning to teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 19(7), 681-695.
- Mead, N. (2007) How effectively does the Graduate Teacher Programme contribute to the development of trainee teachers' professional values? *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 33(3), 309-321.
- Ofsted (2007) An employment-based route into teaching, 2003-6. (London, Ofsted).
- Ofsted (2008) Primary languages in initial teacher training (London, Ofsted).
- Ofsted (2010) The annual report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2009-10 (London, Ofsted).
- Parliament (2012) Written evidence provided by the Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET), House of Commons Education Select Committee. Available online at:

**Citation:**

Thomae, M., Griffiths, V. (2013) 'Early professional development and languages teaching in primary schools: case studies of teachers trained on an employment-based route' *Tean Journal* 5 (2) July [Online]. Available at:  
<http://bit.ly/AtMwtr>(Accessed 04 July 2013).

THOMAE & GRIFFITHS: EARLY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND  
LANGUAGES TEACHING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: CASE STUDIES OF  
TEACHERS TRAINED ON AN EMPLOYMENT-BASED ROUTE

- <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmeduc/1515/1515we05.htm> (accessed on 10 April 2013).
- Ratcliffe, R. (2013) Languages in primary schools: getting ready for 2014. Guardian, 15 May 2013. Available online at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/may/15/languages-primary-schools-2014> (accessed 22 May 2013).
- Smith, K. & McLay, M., 2007. Curates' eggs? Secondary trainee teachers' experience of the Graduate Teacher Programme and the Postgraduate Certificate in Education. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 33(1), 35–54.
- Tinsley, T. & Board, K. (2013) Language learning in primary and secondary schools in England: findings from the 2012 Language Trends survey. (London, CfBT Education Trust).
- Wade, P. & Marshall, H. (2009) Primary modern foreign languages: a longitudinal survey of the implementation of the national entitlement to language learning at key stage 2. (London, DCSF).

**Citation:**

Thomae, M., Griffiths, V. (2013) 'Early professional development and languages teaching in primary schools: case studies of teachers trained on an employment-based route' *Tean Journal* 5 (2) July [Online]. Available at: <http://bit.ly/AtMwtr> (Accessed 04 July 2013).

## Appendix 1 GTP Primary Languages in Schools

### Questionnaire for Trainee Teachers

We are a research team at Canterbury Christ Church University, carrying out a study of primary languages on the Graduate Teacher Programme and would be grateful if you would complete the following short questionnaire. All answers will be confidential and findings will be anonymised. We will also be carrying out some follow-up interviews. The completion of this questionnaire enables you to enter a prize draw for 10 Amazon vouchers worth £10 each.

#### Demographic Details

In order to enable us to analyse and interpret our findings in more detail, we would like to ask you to tell us a little bit about yourself.

1. Your name (anonymous if preferred):

.....

2. Your sex:

Male

Female

3. Your age: .....

This section asks questions about your GTP training, your language capabilities and your work at school. We would be grateful if you would answer the following questions regarding your training.

4. Which GTP provider are you with?

.....

5. What degree do you have? (Please add title and subject)

.....

6. Please add the date your degree was awarded.

.....

7. What did you do immediately before starting the GTP? (*Select all that apply*)

Degree

Work

Other (*please specify*)

.....

8. Which languages do you speak? (Please include your first language)

Language 1: .....

#### Citation:

Thomae, M., Griffiths, V. (2013) 'Early professional development and languages teaching in primary schools: case studies of teachers trained on an employment-based route' *Tean Journal* 5 (2) July [Online]. Available at:

<http://bit.ly/AtMwtr> (Accessed 04 July 2013).



THOMAE & GRIFFITHS: EARLY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND  
LANGUAGES TEACHING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: CASE STUDIES OF  
TEACHERS TRAINED ON AN EMPLOYMENT-BASED ROUTE

Language 2: .....  
 Language 3: .....  
 Language 4: .....  
 Language 5: .....

9. How would you rate your knowledge of and capability in languages based on the list of languages you provided above.

|            | <b>First language</b> | <b>Fluent</b> | <b>Good</b> | <b>Basic</b> | <b>Other (please specify)</b> |
|------------|-----------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|-------------------------------|
| Language 1 |                       |               |             |              |                               |
| Language 2 |                       |               |             |              |                               |
| Language 3 |                       |               |             |              |                               |
| Language 4 |                       |               |             |              |                               |
| Language 5 |                       |               |             |              |                               |

10. On the GTP, are there any sessions on primary languages... (Select all that apply)

- ...at university?
- ...in school?

11. If there are sessions on primary languages (either at university or in school), please add details:

.....  
 .....

12. Have you had any opportunity to see primary languages taught in school? (Select all that apply)

- ...as a separate subject?
- ...using a cross-curricular approach?
- ...using an integrated approach (e.g. calling the register)?  
...at an after school club?
- Other (please specify):

.....  
 .....

13. If you had the opportunity to see primary languages taught in school, please add details such as which year group, which language(s), etc.

.....  
 .....

**Citation:**

Thomae, M., Griffiths, V. (2013) 'Early professional development and languages teaching in primary schools: case studies of teachers trained on an employment-based route' *Tean Journal* 5 (2) July [Online]. Available at: <http://bit.ly/AtMwtr>(Accessed 04 July 2013).

THOMAE & GRIFFITHS: EARLY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LANGUAGES TEACHING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: CASE STUDIES OF TEACHERS TRAINED ON AN EMPLOYMENT-BASED ROUTE

**14.** Have you had any opportunity to take part in primary language teaching?

Yes

No

**15.** If yes, please add details.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**16.** How best could you be supported to teach primary languages?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**17.** Would you be interested in taking part in a follow up interview?

Yes

No

**18.** If you are interested in participating in a follow up interview, please add your phone or mobile number and the best time to contact you.

.....

**19.** If you would like to enter our prize draw of Amazon vouchers, please enter your email address here:

.....

**Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire.**

We might contact you again if you agreed to participate in a follow up interview. We will also contact you if you are the winner of one of the Amazon vouchers.

Thank you very much again for supporting our research. Your help is greatly appreciated.

**Citation:**

Thomae, M., Griffiths, V. (2013) 'Early professional development and languages teaching in primary schools: case studies of teachers trained on an employment-based route' *Teian Journal* 5 (2) July [Online]. Available at: <http://bit.ly/AtMwtr>(Accessed 04 July 2013).