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5. OCCASIONAL TEACHERS' JOB-RELATED LEARNING

INTRODUCTION

Publicly funded schools are hierarchical institutions with many different levels or divisions of power. Each level of authority has a role to play, and each level is situated between those with more authority and those with less. Substitute teachers are treated poorly because they can be. They exist at the lowest level of a hierarchy and are governed by others with more power ... It is important to understand that the inherently hierarchical nature of the school system prevents [occasional] teachers from ever becoming full members of the teaching profession. (Duggleby & Badali 2007, p. 31)

In Chapter 1, Livingstone and Antonelli argue that professionals in class positions with ownership prerogatives have more power than those who are part of the professional employee class, like teachers. However, we also need to acknowledge that there are differences among professional employees. Not all professional employees have equal power. This is particularly the case for teachers. Teachers' power is associated with their positioning within the hierarchy constituting the teacher workforce. This means that certain groups of teachers, and in particular those who are employed in non-permanent arrangements, will have less access to power than do permanent full-time teachers. These arrangements will influence how they do their job and how they learn about their job. This chapter explores how non-permanent job arrangements for teachers – occasional teaching – influence their professional ability to control their job, work environment, and professional learning.

OCCASIONAL TEACHERS

In Canada, one-fifth of the teacher workforce in the public education system work as non-permanent teachers (Livingstone 2011; Work and Lifelong Learning Network, 2005). Non-permanent teachers are a growing contingent professional workforce, reflecting present global employment trends. Contingent work, as defined by Bjorkquist and Kleinhesselink (1999, p. 3), “is any job in which an individual does not have an explicit or implicit contract for long-term employment;” such work can include casual employment, temporary employment, and/or short-term contract work. In Ontario, as elsewhere, non-permanent teachers occupy the lower levels in the professional hierarchy described in Chapter 1. Moreover, non-permanent teachers have the least delegated power – in organizational decision-making participation and perceived choice in planning

one's own work – of any teacher group. Because they are often sent in at the last minute to replace sick colleagues or colleagues engaged in formal professional learning outside the classroom, they cannot control who they teach, where they teach, or what they teach. One way non-permanent teachers cope with limited delegated power, particularly in planning their own work, is to develop particular strategies that help them deal with the unpredictable teaching situations that they find themselves in. They do this by engaging in job-related learning that specifically prepares them for their job arrangement. This chapter describes a qualitative study that was comprised of eighteen semi-structured interviews; fifteen with occasional teachers from the southern Ontario region and three others who had knowledge of occasional teacher and teaching (Kelly,¹ a union representative who bargained on behalf of occasional teachers, Daniel, an employee from the Toronto District School Board and Katherine, a past staff member of a bridging program for internationally trained teachers seeking work in Ontario and a past principal). Specifically, this chapter explores how fifteen non-permanent teachers in Ontario attempted to control and access job through their job-related learning, both formal and informal.

The terms 'substitute teacher' and 'supply teacher' dominate the literature that refers to non-permanent teachers who are hired to 'cover' "when the regular (timetabled) teacher is not able to teach a scheduled class, and another adult is called on to teach or supervise these pupils" (Galloway & Morrison 1994, p. 1). They are identified by a number of different labels which are used interchangeably, such as occasional, temporary, floater, emergency cover, short-term supply, substitute, recruitment agency teacher, relief teacher and teacher on-call, to name a few. Because this chapter focuses on Ontario as a case, terminology from the Ontario context and legislation is used. Thus,

A teacher is an occasional teacher if he or she is employed by a board to teach as a substitute for a teacher or temporary teacher who is or was employed by the board in a position that is part of its regular teaching staff including continuing education teachers. (Education Act 1990, S1 (1.1))

Like any Ontario teacher, occasional teachers must undergo the Ontario teacher accreditation process and become a member of the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). But unlike full-time permanent teachers, they are employed on a temporary basis: "They may work in one school or many. Some are able to work almost full-time in this way, yet do not have a regular contract with any employer or institutions; others work only infrequently" (Galloway & Morrison 1994, p. 1). In Ontario, an occasional teacher may also work in more than one school district and be "a member of more than one teachers' bargaining unit" (Education Act 1997, S122 (277.5)). Occasional teachers can work on a day-by-day (known as daily) basis or in Long Term Occasional (LTO) positions, but neither job arrangement includes long-term employment. The average LTO position is between five to six months (Ontario Ministry of Education 2007). This study specifically focused on occasional teachers who worked on a daily basis.

This sort of contingent work is "practiced in all fields of work and at all occupational levels of private and public sector employment" (Bjorkquist &

Kleinhesselink 1999, p. 3), but most research (Connelly & Gallagher 2004; DiNatalie 2001; Gariety & Shaffer 2001; Golden 2001; Hipple 2001; Redpath, Hurst & Devine 2009; Osterman 2010) does not include teachers' work in alternative employment arrangements (such as occasional teaching) as part of the contingent workforce. Professional, technical and managerial temporary workforces are developing in areas such as information technology, nursing and medicine (Allan & Sienko 1998), so it is not surprising that such a workforce would develop in the teaching profession. In the United Kingdom, Grimshaw, Earnshaw and Hebson (2003) have gone so far as to contemplate whether 'supply' teachers working with teacher recruitment agencies in England can consider themselves as working on a self-employed basis.

GROWTH IN THE CONTINGENT TEACHER WORKFORCE

Expansion of the occasional teacher workforce has been stimulated by a number of influences, including changing student enrolment, the teaching supply and demand cycle, changes in labour practices and the changing nature of work. Similar to other jurisdictions worldwide, the Ontario teacher population has experienced large fluctuations in supply and demand. Teacher retirement hit record highs in the English-speaking public system with approximately 7,000 retirements annually from 1998 to 2002. Ontario teacher education programs increased their intake in response to the resultant teacher shortage. Teachers were also recruited from US border colleges with programs designed for the Ontario market and from the increasing pool of internationally educated teachers (McIntyre 2007). These strategies proved to be successful in meeting the immediate teacher demand. However, the rate of teacher retirement has since decreased to less than 4,600 annually during 2005–09 (Ontario College of Teachers 2011, p. 2) and the success of these strategies has subsequently created a surplus of qualified teachers. Two out of five English-language teachers have had to wait up to four years to be employed, if indeed they are fortunate enough to find full-time employment at all (Ontario College of Teachers 2011, p. 57). In 2010, 11,800 teachers entered the English-speaking teacher workforce (Ontario College of Teachers 2011, p. 2), many of whom joined the growing number of teachers already certified to teach in Ontario and increased the already large number who had not been able to secure a full-time permanent teaching position. Of these new graduates in 2009–10, two out of three were involved only in occasional work or could find no job in teaching of any description (McIntyre 2011).

In 2011, the job queue continued to grow; the Ontario College of Teachers' annual *Transition to teaching* report noted that:

The involuntary unemployment rate for first-year teachers has increased every year for the past five years. What was a three per cent unemployment rate in 2006 is now 24 per cent. For those who did some teaching in their first year, the underemployment rate² also rose from 27 per cent in 2006 to 43 per cent in 2010. (McIntyre 2011, p. 33)

K. POLLOCK

Some new teachers will wait as long as five years to receive a permanent teaching contract. In 2011, one out of five teachers who received certification five years previously was still unemployed or underemployed (McIntyre 2011). This means the occasional teacher pool will grow substantially, and in doing so, will intensify, expand and perpetuate hierarchies in the current teacher workforce.

TEACHER WORKFORCE HIERARCHY

A hierarchy is a system of ranking and organizing things or people, where each element of the system (except for the top element) is subordinate to a single other element. A hierarchy can link entities either directly or indirectly, and either vertically or horizontally. (Wikipedia n.d.)

The Wikipedia definition captures more concisely than most other definitions the key elements of the concept of a hierarchy. It also has its limitations, however. While it points to links among entities, it nevertheless fails to capture how the ordering of these entities revolves around power and control, as it occurs in professional organizations, for example. Hierarchies are implicit in many social processes (Corson 1986), particularly organizations such as governments, educational institutions, businesses, religious groups and political movements. Professions, including teaching, are no exception.

The expansion of the Ontario occasional teacher workforce mirrors differentiated hierarchical workforces in other work sectors and professions, including teaching in other jurisdictions (Harvey 2000; Reich 1992; Soucek 1994). Soucek (1994) describes a three-tier, differentially-skilled, hierarchical teacher workforce as “highly skilled professional workers, specifically skilled peripheral full-time workers, and generically-skilled peripheral part time or casual workers” (p. 55). According to Soucek, the highly skilled professionals in education are core teachers (teachers who teach ‘core’ subject areas such as math, science and English – usually subject areas tested in state-wide standardized tests), senior management, senior staff and expert teachers (teachers that have been identified as having [or supported in developing] expert skills and knowledge in specific key education areas such as special education, assessment, etc., and are targeted for eventual promotion to school district positions). They enjoy job security, promotion opportunities, professional development, and pension and other benefits. Of the limited power that teachers hold, this highly skilled group of teachers has the most negotiating and delegated power of all three worker-groups. Peripheral workers are teachers who are generally permanent and specifically skilled teachers who have less access to career opportunities and exhibit a higher labour turnover, such as core French teachers (Richards 2002) and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers (Bascia & Jacka 2001). Teachers identified as peripheral workers generally experience less power, while generically-skilled peripheral teachers hold little power. The generically-skilled peripheral workers are the part-time, casual or contract staff who work in arrangements such as occasional teaching (Morrison 1999a, 1999b), under enterprise bargaining arrangements, recruitment agency teaching (Barlin & Hallgarten 2001; Grimshaw et al. 2003; Johnson 2001), and

part-time teaching (Young 2002; Young & Grieve 1996). This group has even less job security or access to professional development, benefits and pension than the first peripheral group. Livingstone and Antonelli (2004) point out that (within particular limits) teachers' sense of autonomy is among the highest of all professionals. But not all teachers experience the same degree of classroom autonomy. Because of their job arrangements, daily occasional teachers have the least sense of classroom autonomy.

OCCASIONAL TEACHING, AUTHORITY AND LEARNING

Occasional teachers' inferior positioning within the teacher workforce hierarchy influences both their power and learning. Daily occasional teachers find themselves in a unique situation. While permanent teachers may struggle with professional authority and control over their work, their struggles pale in comparison with the struggles of many daily occasional teachers. For example, occasional teachers in this study explained that because they worked intermittently within the school system, they had a very different type of relationship with students than do full-time teachers. Nicole, a career occasional teacher maintained that:

As a regular teacher you have time to get to know your kids, you've got established routines, you're there all the time with them [students] and so that sets the whole tone, within the classroom, in the school, with the parents, with the administrators, with whomever you come in contact with in the school. As an occasional teacher you're there for the day ... you're parachuted in, you're there for the seven hours and then you're gone. You might never be back in there.

Because the job arrangement of daily occasional teachers was such that there was no long-term, on-going consistency with a particular group of students, occasional teachers did not have the opportunity to build rapport with students nor were they able to develop routines or implement classroom management strategies that had consequences that extended further than the immediate day of teaching. For this reason, students did not perceive daily occasional teachers as having any sense of authority in the classroom, whether or not they are qualified to teach. When describing the occasional teachers' lack of authority in the teaching profession, Andrew, who also taught in the teacher pre-service program, explained, "As an occasional teacher you have no credibility; nobody knows you." As Sonia put it, "You don't have the opportunity to build that rapport with the student."

All the occasional teachers in this study described how students treated them differently from full-time teachers. Students treated occasional teachers with a lack of respect. For instance, Ping commented, "The day the regular teacher is not there, they think it's a long break. So sometimes they stop at nothing to drive you crazy." Consistent with the literature (Lawrence 1988; Shillings 1991), all participants described occasions when students demonstrated little respect for the occasional teacher in the classroom. As one union representative, Kelly, commented, "The students don't treat them like a real teacher. They're considered by many students

to be a babysitter.” Thomas conveyed this lack of respect when students engaged in such acts as “changing the time on the clocks ... changing their name, or sitting in other people’s desks or their favourite thing was everyone goes into fits of coughing.” Participants in this study believed that unless a teacher was a ‘regular’ teacher – someone who teaches on an on-going consistent basis with repeated interaction with a particular group of students – students did not feel that the teacher held any legitimacy. Because of occasional teachers’ job arrangement, students were disrespectful to them because there were no consequences; there was no means for meaningful recourse or follow-up.

Even though daily occasional teachers are subject to the same credentialing requirements as their permanent colleagues and are formally considered professionals according to traditional notions of professional qualifications, their job arrangements and hierarchical positioning eroded their professional authority and control over their work. Daily occasional teachers do not have the same kind of legitimate authority that full-time permanent teachers have because they do not hold an official position (Clifton & Rambaran 1987). This leaves daily occasional teachers with little to no control over the frequency or type of teaching they do in the classroom. It also creates difficulty in accessing appropriate learning for their job arrangement.

Daily occasional teachers’ learning for their job could best be described as job-related learning rather than professional development. Professional development has been described as the “formal and informal provisions for the improvement of educators ... in terms of the competency to carry out their assigned roles” (Joyce, Howey & Yarger 1976, p. 2); as “efforts to improve teachers’ capacity to function as effective professionals by having them learn new knowledge, attitudes and skills” (Gall & Renchler 1985, p. 6); and the “natural learning experiences ... those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school, which constitute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom” (Day 1999, p. 7). In the field of education, the dominant conception of professional development tends to focus specifically on the expert knowledge and skills required for classroom teaching (Furlong, Barton & Whitty 2000; Clarke & Newman 1997). Thus, present notions of professional development do not include all the other informal learning crucial to occasional teaching, such as understanding how schools are organized, how to work with colleagues, how to network with other teachers, how to develop marketing skills, or how to come to understand the culture and social processes within different school sites. Conventional notions of professional development are often not appropriate for daily occasional teachers because they typically assume that teachers return to the same established workplace each day.

The concept of job-related learning better suits the experiences and needs of daily occasional teaching than professional development or learning (Fullan, Hill & Crevola 2006) because it includes these other facets of learning central to occasional teachers, such as gaining access to daily teaching and navigating the education system. As professionals, both full-time permanent and daily occasional teachers actively engage in job-related learning. Every day they informally learn about such things as pedagogy, relationships with members of the school

community, classroom management and so on. They need to engage in this learning in order to do their jobs. But full-time and daily occasional teachers do not always (opt to) learn about the same kinds of things because they are positioned differently within the educational system and have different needs. Daily occasional teachers are compelled to develop different skills than their full-time colleagues, and as such, they also opt for different learning experiences. The job of full-time teachers is ongoing and consistent with consecutive days of employment, whereas an occasional teacher's job is contingent on the absence of a full-time teacher – it is not ongoing and continuous nor is there any guarantee of any employment.

How occasional teachers' work was arranged influenced how they engaged in their work and job-related learning. For example, occasional teachers in this study were interested in either modifications of classroom management strategies or different kinds of classroom strategies. Substitute teachers in this study generally did not use classroom management strategies that required continuous, on-going contact with students (i.e., behaviour contracts) because they were not useful in their daily work arrangement. Ping, for example, related how one method that she learned in teachers college would not work. She was taught that when faced with student(s) who are chatting and not paying attention, she was to walk closer to the student without stopping the lesson. This tactic was designed to encourage the student(s) to refocus. If they persisted, she was supposed to say the student(s)' name(s) and continue with the lesson. She pointed out, though,

that doesn't work as a substitute teacher. You could say 28 names and there would still be talking ... many of the classroom management strategies that I learned in teachers college work if you're the classroom teacher and if you have authority in the room. But, I don't think they really work if you're just walking in [as a substitute teacher].

Ping went on to say that she tries to find other classroom strategies in occasional teacher resources that are more applicable to her job arrangement. Ping went on to explain how it is all about being proactive and setting the classroom expectations at the beginning of the day/class. For example, she mentioned having students at the primary level choose various types of birds or animals to represent themselves and then setting up a reward system where individuals and groups were rewarded for appropriate behaviours throughout the day. If students did need to be addressed, it did not matter if she knew their name; she could refer to them by the animal they represent, and peer pressure to receive the end-of-day-reward would help to keep other children in line. Daily occasional teachers not only opted for different learning experiences when it came to their classroom practices but also spent more time learning about unique aspects of their job, such as how to increase the frequency of their daily employment or secure a full-time teaching position (Pollock 2010).

TYPES OF OCCASIONAL TEACHERS

Just as Acker (1999) argues, “In its search for generalities about teaching and the teaching occupation, the literature on teachers has been guilty of creating a category of ‘teacher’ that does no justice to the diversity contained within the term” (p. 19), occasional teachers as a group were not homogenous, but rather diverse. For 2006, the Ontario Ministry of Education reported that the occasional teacher workforce was composed of approximately 20 per cent retirees, 40 per cent career occasionals, and 40 per cent new entrants (Ontario Ministry of Education 2007). The Ontario College of Teachers further sub-divided the occasional teacher workforce by reporting that the large “new entrant group” could be further divided into four groups: Internationally Educated Teachers (IETs) representing just under one-half of the occasional teacher workforce, compared to approximately one in five new Ontario graduates, one in four teachers educated in other provinces; the remainder are teachers educated at American border-colleges that allowed Ontario residents to take education degrees and do their practice teaching in Ontario classrooms (McIntyre 2007).

The fifteen occasional teacher participants interviewed in this study of occasional teachers’ learning were part of the Ontario English-speaking public school system (for details, see the Appendix). All of these occasional teachers participated in the teacher workforce through daily teaching. In fact, participants were selected only if they had taught just as a daily occasional teacher within the previous 12 months. The participants represent three of the types of occasional teachers identified above: internationally educated teachers (which is a sub-group of the new entrant category), career occasional teachers and retirees. The groups were not always completely distinct from one another; that is, the characteristics of particular individuals sometimes overlapped with those in other groups. For instance, some career occasional teachers who previously held a full-time, permanent teaching position began their teaching career as occasional teachers until they secured a more permanent job. Even though there were general characteristics shared across all groups of occasional teachers, such as their non-permanent job arrangement and relative powerlessness, each group nevertheless displayed some unique tendencies.

Internationally Educated Teachers (IETs)

The internationally educated teachers sought full-time, permanent work. These teachers were not necessarily new to the teaching profession – some had more than ten years of teaching experience elsewhere – but they were new to the Ontario context. According to 2001 and 2006 Canada census data, IETs made up 5.4 per cent and 6.9 per cent of the teacher population, respectively. More importantly, however, the increase in this proportion is less than the increase in the proportion of visible minority citizens in the general population, which increased from 13.4 per cent to 16.2 per cent (Ryan, Pollock & Antonelli 2009, p. 597). Four IETs were interviewed from this group: three women and one man. The women are referred to by the pseudonyms Ping, Zahra, and Sonia; the one male is referred to as Ogu.

OCCASIONAL TEACHERS' JOB-RELATED LEARNING

In addition to receiving certification outside of Canada, each teacher also possessed additional certification or higher education, such as master's degrees in areas such as education, mathematics and physics, some before coming to Canada and some after immigrating to Canada.

Career Occasionals

Career occasional teachers in this study had either held a previous permanent teaching position within the Ontario English-speaking public school system before taking up their occasional positions, or had been teaching as an occasional teacher for more than five years. Members in this group did not intend to seek full-time, permanent teaching jobs within the next five years. Six of the seven teachers in the study had held full-time permanent teaching job previously, but because of other commitments and responsibilities, they chose to teach as daily occasional teachers. Only one teacher indicated that she began her teacher education with the intention of doing daily occasional jobs. She reasoned that she was going to have children immediately and that occasional work fit well with her life on a farm where she helps her husband during harvesting season. Five of the seven career occasionals were women. The women all indicated that their motives for occasional work centred on balancing parenting responsibilities while still working at a job that they enjoyed. The five career occasional women are referred to, using pseudonyms, as Emily, Helen, Claire, Nicole, and Heather; the two men are Andrew and Paul. All these respondents were in a mid-career stage, each having taught for a number of years in the teacher profession.

Retirees

This group of occasional teachers, four in total, consisted of three women (pseudonyms: Andrea, Melissa, and Pam) and one man (pseudonym: Thomas). These teachers were retired from permanent teaching and were collecting an Ontario teacher's pension, whose rules allow a limited numbers of days of continued teaching after retirement. All were transitioning out of the teacher workforce and anticipated eventually leaving teaching entirely.

OCCASIONAL TEACHERS' JOB-RELATED LEARNING: FORMAL AND INFORMAL

Occasional teachers engage in both formal and informal job-related learning. A more meaningful way to consider occasional teachers' engagement in job-related learning than merely recording which groups engage in what kinds of formal learning is to consider their motivations. Participants in this study had already navigated through the accreditation system and were certified teachers. The following sections discuss the level of, and motivations for, both formal and informal learning.

K. POLLOCK

Formal Learning

In this case, formal learning is the institutional learning required for certification and the formal professional development opportunities offered by the school district, teacher federations and provincial ministry of education. Daily occasional teachers in this study engaged in various kinds of formal learning. The teachers identified formal learning with organized formal professional development programs such as professional activity (PA) and professional development (PD) days. Other forms of formal learning included Additional Qualification (AQ) courses, Additional Basic Qualification (ABQ) courses, General Equivalency Diploma (GED) night courses, and bridging programs (programs for teachers who had recently immigrated to Canada and were working towards their Ontario certification and or trying to secure a teaching position), such as the *TeachinOntario*³ program. Findings indicated that participants, who had little control over their job arrangements and were struggling in the classroom, were motivated to participate in more formal learning. For example, during her interview, Sonia declared that she was at “total odds with the Ontario education system,” and it appeared from her responses that she participated in more formal professional learning than other participants. Those who perceived they had sufficient expert knowledge and had considerable access to daily teaching jobs participated less in formal learning. For example, new entrants as an entire group participated more in formal professional development than career occasionals and retirees (Pollock 2010). Indeed retirees participated in next to no formal learning. Andrea, a retiree, commented,

I just didn't feel the need for it. And the professional development that I did do over my years [32 years] as a teacher, I ended up finding not the least bit helpful. A lot of the workshop leaders were people that had been around for 20 or 30 years and it was the same thing over, and over, and it was, as far as many of us [full-time, permanent teachers] were concerned, a waste of time.

Unlike the internationally educated teachers in this study, retirees were not seeking full-time teaching employment and therefore did not perceive a need for additional formal education as a means of providing better employment opportunities or learning new things. Retirees in this study felt that there was no real need for more formal professional learning. This is consistent with Livingstone's (2007) survey finding that adults in their mid-50s substantially reduced their participation in job-related formal training because of declining employment-incentives as they approached retirement. Retirees in this study also believed their previous formal professional learning and on-the-job experience as full-time, permanent teachers provided them with the necessary skills and knowledge to continue teaching as daily occasional teachers. In fact, according to the retirees, many administrators employed retirees because they believed that retirees held ‘expert knowledge’ about classroom management and teaching – they already had experience as full-time, permanent teachers. Daniel, also a former principal, commented that principals looked for experienced teachers:

because the principal is counting on having somebody very reliable. If you can get a retired teacher to come back to your school, someone who knew your community, your community knew them, knew the culture of the school, knew the students, and if your board allows you to request people, and many school boards do, yes, that person [retiree] is going to get the job.

This passage reflects what many occasional teachers believed were the ideal knowledge and skills that administrators were looking for in a daily occasional teacher; that is, the kind of contextual knowledge most needed to be effective in different classrooms in that particular community/school/board. Daniel believed that utilizing recently retired teachers could be beneficial to a school if the retiree continued to do daily occasional jobs at the school from which he/she retired. Retirees continued to carry some of the prestige, power, and respect associated with a full-time, permanent teaching position. Initially, they had more classroom control and were given more authority for classroom decision-making. However, this power and level of authority existed only for a limited time after the retirement – a honeymoon period. After the honeymoon period, the retiree goes from

being part of a community, to being isolated, 'cause they've spent 25, 30 years as part of a community no matter which school they've been in for however long in their careers, all of a sudden they're a non-entity ... (Kelly, local union representative)

As some participants in the study reported, this position of privilege was only temporary. The teacher's identity shifted as students, who at one time identified the individual as a full-time teacher, progressed through the grades. New students entering the school site identified the retiree as a daily occasional teacher who was lower on the hierarchy than a full-time teacher. The retiree, originally considered an ideal occasional teacher, became just another occasional teacher as student attitudes towards the teacher changed. This in turn left the retired occasional teacher with less power and authority in the classroom. A number of retirees mentioned that when working non-permanently for more than five years, they began to intentionally seek out more informal professional learning (Pollock 2010) as a way to deal with their shifting authority.

Both career occasional teachers and internationally educated teachers in this study participated in formal professional learning, but to different degrees and for different reasons. For instance, career occasional teachers engaged in formal learning more out of personal interest than for resumé-building, although the latter did occur to some degree. When asked why she attended workshops, Emily, a career occasional, commented:

I would say it's my own incentive ... you get a certificate to put in our portfolio when you're done, but I would say for the most part it's my own initiative. What things are going to help me?

Some felt that they had completed enough formal schooling and did not need additional training for their job. When asked if she would like to be involved in any type of formal learning, Helen, another career occasional, stated:

K. POLLOCK

... not really ... I've done so many courses and extra-curricular this and AQ that, like I've done enough. I've done my masters. I'm finished ... I'm done ...

Heather, also a career occasional teacher, commented that she took a few additional AQ courses and attended professional development events at the school level, “more out of interest” than anything else. A career occasional for a few years, she had established herself in a number of schools and was receiving fairly consistent work, and therefore did not view further formal education as a means of securing more work. She also did not feel that there was any financial gain to doing additional formal training because in her local collective agreement, daily occasional teachers received a flat rate of pay.

The internationally educated teachers in this study, however, appeared to participate in substantial amounts of formal learning, motivated by the desire to secure more occasional teaching days or a full-time, permanent teaching position. One respondent stated that he took “an ABQ course in English to get [an] interview [to be put on the occasional teaching list].” Another engaged in formal learning despite the fact that she already had considerable credentials and experience. Even though Zahra taught for more than ten years in her home country, has undergraduate and master’s degrees in math and physics, and a teaching degree, she was still having difficulty securing teaching work, so she attended a Grade 12 mathematics class at a night school. She argued that it gave her a better pedagogical understanding of the Ontario context, and expressed the hope that it would indicate to others that she had formal understanding of it.

Ping, another new entrant, was certified and had taught in Hong Kong for over ten years. In Canada, she received her Ontario certification but found little work. She then completed a bachelor of arts in linguistics at an Ontario university and began occasional teaching. After her interview, she was short-listed for an LTO position. She then “joined five courses during the summer to equip myself to teach math” at the elementary level.

In this study, most IETs participated in additional professional development. At the time of the study, this professional development included bridging programs such as *TeachinOntario*. *TeachinOntario* supported IETs through an informative web site, individual and group counselling, assistance in obtaining documents, language assessment and training, teacher orientation sessions and help with job search strategies.⁴ It also assisted IETs in gaining access to the teaching profession. Ogus pointed out that during the program “speakers from a local school board were invited to talk to us about how to apply for work, how to write a proper resumé, and so on.” Ping mentioned that in her bridging program they were guaranteed an interview (but not necessarily a job) with one of the local school boards if they completed the program. These programs also help IETs in gaining the cultural capital that they need to navigate the Ontario education system. For instance, *TeachinOntario* not only provided IETs with information on provincial curriculum and legislation such as the Safe Schools Act, interview training, resumé writing, classroom management, and understanding of the current educational terminology, but also addressed cultural differences that centre on issues of respect, dress code,

and customs. For example, in terms of classroom management and discipline, Zarha, described how in her bridging program she shadowed a few teachers in different schools to learn how “different teachers demonstrated different strategies in front of us and these [were] very effective.”

Programs like *TeachinOntario* can assist IETs in receiving certification and gaining access to the ‘eligible to hire’ list, but this does not guarantee that the occasional teacher will secure any days of work. The program did not offer ongoing support that enabled occasional teachers to move up the workforce hierarchy. The Ontario government has recognized the importance of this sort of support for new teachers in permanent teaching positions and has introduced the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP),⁵ discussed more thoroughly in Chapters 6 and 7, which has recently included new occasional teachers who hold long-term teaching contracts (Ontario College of Teachers 2008a). Yet, little on-going support exists for daily occasional teachers who do not have a long-term contract, particularly IETs.

Informal Learning

Just as full-time teachers engage in a great deal of job-related informal learning (Smaller 2005), so too do daily occasional teachers. However, this engagement differs. One of the key differences revolves around the focus of the informal learning. Participants indicated that most of their learning occurred through some type of informal learning. This is due, in part, to the fact that most formal learning opportunities do not help them with their work (Pollock 2009). As Retallick (1999) points out, even full-time teachers struggle with ownership and meaningfulness of ideas presented at formal professional learning opportunities. Success of formal professional learning appears to come once full-time teachers have an opportunity to try and test ideas out in their own classroom practice; only then do they report the professional learning as possibly useful. Occasional teachers are even more removed from this process of meaning-making and ownership of ideas because they do not have the luxury of testing out ideas in their ‘own’ classroom. The situation is compounded by the fact that the content of formal professional learning opportunities is often not relevant to what they actually do (Pollock 2009).

Occasional teachers may attend formal professional development sessions because the subject or activity being presented is a board priority and not because it is helpful for their immediate work situation (Pollock 2009). They may use the formal professional learning opportunities to build a resume in hopes of securing either more frequent work or more permanent work, not because it will help them with their immediate teaching practice (Pollock 2009). For example, a professional development session that involves new reporting procedures in Ontario would not be helpful to occasional teachers because they are not required to evaluate students or track their progress. However, knowledge of the new reporting procedures could be helpful for future teacher interviews. Unfortunately, few formal learning opportunities meet the needs of teachers working in non-permanent teaching positions because many of these activities are designed for full-time permanent teachers whose work differs from that of occasional teachers (Betts 2006;

K. POLLOCK

Damianos 1998; Duggleby 2007; Duggleby & Badali 2007). So, occasional teachers have little choice but to rely heavily upon informal learning.

In this study, internationally educated teachers reported participating more in informal learning, as well as more formal learning, than career-occasionals and retirees. That is not to say that career occasionals and retirees did not engage in informal learning. But they engaged in informal learning more frequently when there was a substantial change in work arrangement such as location (different school, board, province, country). For daily occasional teachers in this study, much of the informal learning occurred at the job-site, as Emily, a career-occasional indicated.

It's all perpetual ... development. You go into hundreds of teacher classrooms and you see the way they do it, you have access to their lesson plan, you have access to their daybook, probably you see more about how a teacher runs the classroom in a day than the principal sees doing an evaluation cause you're there so you massively accumulate ideas. For people who are hoping to go into a full-time position it really does give you professional exposure to a wide range of pedagogical styles, classroom set-ups, means of planning ...

Daily occasional teachers generally often found themselves in unique learning situations. They had little professional autonomy as they were expected to follow instructions from the absent teacher as well as the provincial curriculum guidelines. Occasional teachers' professional autonomy came into play when they had to decide whether they had the subject knowledge to carry out the assigned lessons, and/or if the lesson plans left for the students were appropriate for the immediate context of occasional teaching. Occasional teachers encountered many different lesson plans that included different pedagogical strategies for a broad range of curricula. This breadth and depth can be a good source for ideas of practice. Livingstone (2005) points out, "Most adults probably engage in multiple forms of learning on an ongoing basis, with varying emphases and tendencies" (p. 5). According to Livingstone, the physical classroom offers up numerous opportunities for simultaneous learning. Some daily occasional teachers may go about their teaching day engaging in "tacit forms of learning and other everyday activities" (Livingstone 2005, p. 5) without a purposeful agenda of consciously learning from the regular teacher's classroom. Other daily occasional teachers may explicitly go into new teaching environments with intentions of gaining new knowledge, understanding, and skill. The type of learning depends on one's social and cultural context. This was certainly the case for IETs who want to learn the general culture and climate of Ontario schools.

Church, Bascia and Shragge's (2008) definition of informal learning reflects the learning IETs engage in when attempting to access their profession and effectively teach in the classroom:

Informal learning is both voluntary and involuntary, sometimes simultaneously. It blurs the boundaries between intellectual, technical,

social, political and emotional forms of knowledge. It is embedded in the processes of daily life as a means for coping, survival and change. (p. 3)

IETs in this study explicitly engaged in more intentional informal learning than career occasional teachers and retirees. The main purpose of their engagement was to gain a better understanding of the Ontario public education system. These understandings included knowledge of the structure of the provincial and local education system, pedagogy, knowledge, skill, and cultural differences. One way in which IETs engaged in informal learning was through classroom volunteering. Classroom volunteering in this case was reported as actual assistance with, and observation of, teaching in a classroom, not necessarily extracurricular activities such as coaching sports teams that full-time teachers report participating in, for example. As Ogus stated,

Volunteering ... Volunteering, I would say, ninety per cent of it was to my benefit. ten per cent to the benefit of the school ... I learned what the school was about, the people who work [there], the principal, vice-principal, department heads, schools are not that big in my country ... I am not accustomed to the department thing, because I taught in university, but not in a school like this. And the volume of the job is really a lot ...

Besides volunteering at a school site to network with staff, building resumés, securing a reference, and gaining 'experience,' Sonia, Ping, Zahra and Ogus commented that volunteering in a school site that included volunteering within a classroom was *the* way of consciously learning about the Ontario public school system. Daniel, a school board employee, and Katherine, who was also a past principal, encouraged the practice of classroom volunteering as a way to understand the education system. In general, IETs were advised by school administrators to do classroom volunteer work as a way of learning about the Ontario public school system. No retirees or career occasional teachers in this study engaged in classroom volunteering as part of their professional learning nor were they encouraged to do so by others such as school principals.

The learning in which IETs engaged was different from the everyday perceptions, general socialization and more tacit informal learning of Ontario-raised teachers because the Ontario public education system is part of the latter's culture. Specific knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and practices associated with the education system were largely taken for granted by those who grew up in Ontario's school system. For individuals not familiar with the Ontario public system, however, these unconscious behaviours and practices were new and unfamiliar and were judged against the individuals' prior knowledge and learning from some other context. As Zahra said:

You work here as a volunteer and observe. You watch the teacher; what she is doing, how she prepares the lesson plan, how she delivers the lesson, what electronic resources she uses here, how she accommodates the diversity in the classroom, how she accommodates the student with different learning styles and how she facilitate the students with his or her instructional technology and all of the multiple intelligences ...

K. POLLOCK

Therefore, what one person considered tacit knowledge, another made a conscious effort to acquire in his/her informal learning practices. Perhaps more significantly, volunteering at school sites appears to be one of the few ways that occasional teachers can receive effective mentoring from other teachers.

TEACHER WORKFORCE HIERARCHY AND LEARNING

The findings from this study illustrate that the degree of professional authority and control over work influences learning. While many teachers higher up the workforce hierarchy engage in both substantial job-related informal learning and in formal professional learning, those occasional teachers at the bottom of the hierarchy, particularly internationally educated teachers, appeared to be more preoccupied with job-related intentional informal learning. Some of the latter learning had little to do with actual teaching in a class. Given their marginal position, occasional teachers were also concerned with learning that which allowed them to gain access to increased or more secure teacher employment. The higher up an occasional teacher was in the hierarchy, the more opportunity he/she had to engage in formal professional development. Conversely, the further down the hierarchy, the less opportunity one had for formal learning and the more one engaged in additional informal job-related learning. This also applied to differences among occasional teachers.

In the study, daily occasional teachers said that they participated in less formal professional learning than full-time teachers and for a number of reasons. One reason for this is that some were asked to cover for full-time teachers who themselves are attending formal professional learning. Daily occasional teachers' professional decision-making in this case centred on either working for the day or attending a professional development session. The way their work was arranged means that some occasional teachers tended by default to have less access to formal professional learning opportunities because they choose work over formal professional learning. Occasional teachers who hired into long-term occasional teaching positions (and are higher up the hierarchy), on the other hand, had more access to formal professional learning opportunities. Take, for example, an occasional teacher employed in a long-term teaching contract for four months. If the teacher's employment coincides with some type of formal professional learning for teachers in that school or board (such as a professional development/activity day), the occasional teacher is usually expected to participate. A sample collective agreement stipulates:

F.11.1 A long-term occasional teacher who is scheduled to work when there is a Professional Activity Day will be paid for the day and will be required to participate in the scheduled professional activity. (York Region District School Board 2004, p. 13)

This participation is considered part of their employment, and therefore they are paid to attend. This is not the case for occasional teachers who are working on a daily basis at the time of the scheduled professional activity day. In most cases

OCCASIONAL TEACHERS' JOB-RELATED LEARNING

they are neither required to participate in the professional learning opportunity, nor paid if they choose to attend, as shown by this collective agreement provision:

11.02 A Short Term Occasional Teacher may attend, without pay, scheduled Professional Activity Days arranged by the Board subject to space availability. (Renfrew County District School Board 2004, p. 9)

In some cases daily occasional teachers require approval of the school's superintendent of education or designate (York Region District School Board 2004).

Daily occasional teachers' motivation for participating in different kinds of professional learning varied in the study. For example, teachers educated internationally found themselves positioned low on the hierarchy. Motivated to secure more teaching work and better understand the local education context, many IETs engaged in substantial amounts of informal learning. By classroom volunteering, IETs informally acquired not just information about pedagogy and curricula, but knowledge of school cultures and the school system in general. This knowledge in turn made it possible for them to acquire more days of teaching and more formal professional learning opportunities. In terms of professional autonomy and decision-making, IETs often found themselves at the lowest level of the workforce hierarchy, especially when volunteering, which provided little to no professional autonomy or decision-making power. In these subordinate positions, they were at the mercy of other professionals who control their time and work.

CONCLUSION

Learning is an integral part of occasional teaching. The type of learning which occasional teachers undertook depended on the motivations for engaging in occasional teaching and the stage these teachers were at in their teaching careers. Retirees and career occasional teachers engaged less in formal learning than did IETs who needed to acquire learning to enhance their job prospects and status. While the majority of IETs and career occasionals wanted to participate in continued formal learning, they also recognized that not all professional development sessions covered areas of concern to them. Occasional teachers also engaged in informal learning. Internationally educated teachers were more consciously involved in intentional informal learning than the other occasional teachers as they attempted to acquire not only knowledge about the organizations in which they worked but gain the necessary cultural capital to navigate the current education system. In other words, in this study, the least powerful group of Ontario teachers were perhaps the most engaged in conscious intentional informal learning.