

Teaching, learning and researching: A reflective journey into increasing the efficacy of our own mentoring practices

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Abstract

Students undertaking Initial Teacher Education in Scotland through the postgraduate route are required by the General Teaching Council of Scotland to undertake approximately 18 weeks on school placements. During placements students are mentored by a school-based partner and a member of University staff assigned as their School Experience Tutor (SET). This paper seeks to disseminate progress on an ongoing project focused on supporting students during school placements through the development of formative support materials to be used by SETs, students and school-based mentors to facilitate mutual professional development.

The project identified three action points which sought to support the creation of professional knowledge spaces through focused professional dialogue in order to meet the needs of the PGDE programme and the diverse needs of individual students in a variety of professional contexts so enhancing the quality of student learning. To achieve its goals the project has piloted the use of structured learning conversations, a set of professional activities, and Personal and Professional Development Planning.

We believe that this will be of interest to those engaged in supporting students engaged in ITE programmes and more generally those who have an interest in the process of mentoring others.

Keywords: school placements; (asynchronous) learning conversations; mentoring; partnership.

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Introduction

In November 2009, the Scottish Government asked Graham Donaldson, the outgoing HM Senior Chief Inspector of Education, to conduct a fundamental review of teacher education in Scotland (SG, 2011). Teacher education in Scotland is described by a framework of professional standards which, despite apparent linkages, was relatively unplanned and non-sequential leading to fragmented, rather than career-long professional-development journeys (Carroll, 2009). The published review argues that teacher education should embrace a form of 'extended professionalism' in which there is:

'a more integrated relationship between theory and practice, between the academic and the practitioner, between the provider of teacher education and the school ... Teachers should see themselves as educators not just of the young people in their charge but of their colleagues locally, nationally and internationally' (SG, 2011:4).

This has implications for the nature of partnership between schools and universities requiring 'new and strengthened models of partnership among universities, local authorities, schools and individual teachers' (SG, 2011:91). The notion of the 'extended professional' also has implications for the relationship between the receiving class teacher and the student teacher. The type of relationship being described is one that goes beyond supporting the development of functional competence (i.e. through supervision), notwithstanding that this is critically important, to facilitate the development of the students' sense of their professional identity as a 'teacher' through mentoring (Walkington, 2005). Orland-Barak (2006:14) also argues that the multi-faceted nature of mentoring extends beyond supporting functional competence as it includes, amongst other things, 'instructing, being an information source, co-thinker and inquirer, evaluator and learning companion'. Arguably, this may be compromised in situations where the selection of mentors is based around 'experience' (i.e. seniority) with little thought to whether the person selected has the skills, dispositions and capability to engage the students in meaningful and sustained professional dialogue aimed at bringing about a change in practice. Furthermore, this is hindered if the class teacher, no matter how experienced, has little knowledge

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of what the University programme involves (Walkington, 2005) and how this relates to the students' practical experience in the classroom.

This paper is borne out of the work of a project funded through the Learning and Teaching Fund (LTDF) at the University of Glasgow. This LTDF project seeks to develop an innovative method of supporting students while on school placement (practicum) that enhances and moderates the students' learning experience, while contributing to the wider aim of developing a shared vision of the students' development. The LTDF project aims to create a series of professional knowledge spaces by developing formative support materials to be used by school experience tutors (SETs) and school-based mentors to support students on placement through the use of focused professional dialogue.

School Experience

Within Scotland, Initial Teacher Education (ITE) at both undergraduate and postgraduate level is located in Schools of Education within Universities and externally accredited by the General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS) who act as gatekeepers to the profession on behalf of the Minister for Education. Unlike England, where there are multiple paths of entry into the profession, the Scottish system is relatively unified and broadly consistent across the providers. New entrants to the profession either undertake a four-year undergraduate degree (e.g. BEd, BTechEd, etc.) or a one-year postgraduate diploma (PGDE). This paper explores the reporting of professional competences, in the form of written feedback, provided to students following school placements and the nature of professional partnership as part of the postgraduate students' experience on the ITE programme at the University of Glasgow. However, the findings reported here are equally relevant to students on undergraduate programmes. On successful completion of the postgraduate programme students are simultaneously awarded the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) and become eligible for provisional registration as a teacher with GTCS (Brisard, Menter & Smith, 2005; Ellis, 2009). Consequently, postgraduate students emerging from programmes of ITE are expected to have an understanding of education as an academic discipline such that they are able to

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reflect actively upon and develop their practice in order to bring about improvements in young people's learning whilst at the same time have developed a set of professional skills and competences that will enable them to function effectively as teachers (Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005).

Currently, postgraduate students on ITE programmes are required to achieve these highly ambitious goals on a full-time programme, lasting for a minimum of 36 weeks, or the equivalent on a part-time basis. At least 50% of the programme must be devoted to school/educational placement experience which will occur in each school term, with a block of at least 4 weeks taking place towards the end of the programme (GTCS, 2006a:4).

The placement experience consists of three assessed blocks of placement, each of six weeks duration, over the duration of their 36-week programme. Whilst in school students gain 'practical experience of classroom teaching' (Edwards & Mutton, 2007: 505) and are jointly mentored by school partners (usually the class teacher hosting the student and/or a nominated member of the senior management team) as well as a visiting SET. School placements are often positively framed by students as the main source of facilitating and understanding of teachers' professional knowledge (Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005). School placements act as boundary crossing events whereby students make sense of the systematised, abstract knowledge of the university and the situated professional knowledge of experienced classroom practitioners (McIntyre, 1991).

To facilitate school placements Higher Education institutions (HEIs) enter into partnership arrangements with Scottish Local Authority (SLA) education departments. The literature on 'partnership' remains 'under-defined' or 'ill-defined' with little by way of connection between theory and research on inter-organisational change (Clifford and Millar, 2007:15). As a national university, serving all of Scotland, students at Glasgow can be placed in any of the SLAs although we tend to utilise those SLAs within the highly urbanised central belt of Scotland. The schools to which the students are assigned are determined by the SLAs. Although we talk of 'partnership'

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it is the University provider who is ultimately responsible for the quality of the ITE programme (Hopper, 2001). This model of partnership has been described as 'complementary partnership' (Furlong *et al.*, 2000) 'reflecting the view that an HEI would take responsibility for the organisation of the overall programme and assume a separate but complementary role to that of the school' (Edwards & Mutton, 2007:505). An alternative view of partnership is that it involves:

'collaboration and co-operation undertaken between two or more institutions or agencies with the aim of providing a formalised alliance in support of initial training for teachers' (Moyle & Stuart, 2003:9).

Such an approach would require ITE university mentors to work in partnership with Local Authority and school-based mentors to develop shared understandings of the role of ITE in order to develop an integrated model of theory and practice in teacher development and learning.

There would appear to be an inherent problem here in that 'partnership' is in reality a highly ambiguous construct (Burn, 2006) being defined differently in different contexts. Furthermore, Hopper (2001:219) suggests that 'partnership' is often one-sided in that Universities need schools to provide school experience placements but schools do not need Universities. Indeed, supporting school experience placements is seen by some as a distraction to the 'primary function of the school which is the education of the pupils' (Brisard, Menter & Smith, 2005:11).

As part of the 'partnership' arrangement, University staff assigned to postgraduate students as School Experience Tutors (SETs) are expected to visit students while they are on professional practice, observe their teaching, look over their documentation (School File) and discuss the student's progress with the class teacher and the student before providing formative written feedback to the student on their progress (White, 2009) in relation to the Standard for Initial Teacher Education (SITE) benchmarks (GTCS, 2006b). Currently, this support is largely duplicated by the school-based teacher-mentor but as this takes place throughout the school placement it complements the 'parachute model' of the tutor visit. This model of complementary duplication of student mentoring is subject to review in

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order to identify a more collaborative or fully integrated model of ITE in which ‘the expertise of school and university staff is pooled and deployed together in all aspects of the programme’ (Brisard, Menter & Smith, 2005:14) such that the programme is sustainable and consistent in facilitating professional learning and development in order to meet the challenges of teacher education for the 21st century.

Consequently, we are striving to create a programme architecture that supports ‘improved communication and connectedness, trust, and equity between school and university partners’ (Doolittle, Sudeck & Rattigan, 2008:309).

It is our contention that the process of ‘collaborative partnership’ will be aided using asynchronous triologic learning conversations with school-based mentors, SETs and students carrying out linked conversations in different knowledge spaces and at different times followed by periods of reflection. Consequently, our attention is focused on what is learned from whom in partnership relations; including recognition of the potential for the creation of knowledge supported through focused professional dialogue. This is an acknowledgement that knowledge creation is an interactive rather than a linear process (Niemi, 2008). Guilar (2001) suggests that the dialogue set involves the facilitators recognising and managing the following types of dialogue within the learning conversation:

- establishing relationships and connections;
- being open to possibilities rather than knowing all the answers;
- partnership and alignment;
- action and accountability linked to commitments;
- learning and completion.

The iterations of dialogue, practice-focused feedback (i.e., written and verbal), and reflection on practice will hopefully facilitate the support and development of the students’ practice, as well as enabling SETs and school-based teacher-mentors to gain shared understandings on the reporting of professional competences, in the form of written feedback and the part it plays in improving professional practice

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(White, 2009). Consequently, a 'culture of evidence' and professional knowledge creation is promoted in these school-university partnerships through focused professional dialogue.

Methodology

Stage 1

The University of Glasgow offers ITE provision at undergraduate and postgraduate level. The data analysed was drawn from the three school-based placements that sit within the PGDE programme (2009-2010). Students on the ITE programme leading to the PGDE qualification undertake a short, professional-development journey leading to the Standard for Initial Teacher Education (GTCS, 2006b). In this framework professional development is outlined in terms of a number of benchmark statements within the three key elements of:

- professional knowledge and understanding;
- professional skills and abilities;
- professional values and personal commitment.

These elements are seen as being inherently linked to each other in the development of the teacher, and one aspect does not exist independently of the other two. It is this inter-relationship among all three which develops the professionalism of the teacher and leads to appropriate professional action (GTCS, 2006b:5).

The data was drawn from three school-based reports, completed towards the end of the placement, and two tutor reports each of which provide the student with a record of their strengths and development needs in relation to the SITE benchmarks (GTCS, 2006b). The data set consisted of 120 reports for students who had successfully completed the programme representing a 10% sample of the student cohort (n = 24). During Stage 1 a distribution of comments across the students' reports was obtained by coding according to:

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- positive or negative comment,
- links to SITE benchmark statements.

Stage 2

The data was analysed by the technique of analytic induction (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). This is a method based on the constant comparative method developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as part of the 'grounded theory' approach. The basic aim of such an approach was to generate theoretical constructs from the data rather than to impose a theoretical construct on the data. The technique involved the project team, working independently, reading and re-reading batches of the respondents' reports in order to identify patterns and develop a coding or category system on the basis of the emerging patterns. Coding was interspersed with team meetings in which the various coding systems were subjected to examination followed by subsequent checking and rechecking of the emerging interpretations to facilitate progressive focussing (Smith & Biley, 1997). Consequently, this technique incorporated several iterative and recursive cycles in developing the categorisation system. The coding exercises were separated in time. Initially, this was not a conscious decision but rather one borne out of the circumstances experienced by the project team; the write up of our data analysis findings became a process rather than an event. Although time consuming, it was nevertheless found that this process of layered analysis separated in time was useful as a means of identifying and subsequently verifying the thinking behind the themes emerging from the process of categorisation.

Findings

'Peripheral' benchmarks

The distribution of comments across the students' reports can be seen in Tables 1 to 3. A small number of school-based mentors provided little by way of comment, merely ticking the satisfactory/unsatisfactory box. Those who did provide comment tended to provide descriptive restatements of the benchmark statements indicating that the students had 'demonstrated', 'achieved', etc., a particular aspect of the

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Standard. SETs also reused the language of the benchmark statements by indicating that students were able to meet the benchmark, e.g., ‘aware of professional responsibilities and how policy/practice impacts on schools/teaching’. An examination of the data also suggested that within each of the key elements there appears to be a range of ‘peripheral’ benchmarks for which there was little by way of comment across all of the placements from both school-based mentors and SETs, for example:

- Professional knowledge and understanding - 1.1.2, 1.1.4, 1.2.1, 1.3.1 and 1.3.2.
- Professional skills and abilities – 2.1.5, 2.4.1 and 2.4.2.
- Professional values and personal commitment – 3.1 and 3.3.

Professional Knowledge and Understanding		Positive comment	Negative comment
1.1	Curriculum	405	31
1.1.1	Acquire knowledge and understanding of the relevant area(s) of pre-school, primary or secondary school curriculum.	199	13
1.1.2	Acquire the knowledge and understanding to fulfil their responsibilities in respect of cross-curricular themes including citizenship, creativity, enterprising attitudes, literacy and numeracy; personal, social and health education; and ICT, as appropriate to the sector and stage of education.	66	0
1.1.3	Acquire the knowledge and understanding to enable them to plan coherent and progressive teaching programmes, and justify what they teach.	114	18
1.1.4	Acquire an understanding of the nature of the curriculum and its development.	26	0

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Professional Knowledge and Understanding		Positive comment	Negative comment
1.2	Education systems and professional responsibilities	308	0
1.2.1	Acquire a broad and critical understanding of the principal features of the education system, educational policy and practice.	88	0
1.2.2	Acquire a good working knowledge of the sector in which they teach and their professional responsibilities within it.	220	0
1.3	Principles and perspectives	119	53
1.3.1	Draw on relevant principles, perspectives and theories to inform professional values and practices.	62	22
1.3.2	Acquire an understanding of research and its contribution to education.	57	31

Table 1. Professional knowledge and understanding

It is often asserted that school placements provide an opportunity to integrate theory and practice (Argyris & Schön, 1974) such that students are able to deal with the day-to-day challenges of practice whilst at the same time have an understanding of how to engage in development focused activity to generate better practice: 'constructive feedback, followed by critical discussion, is a typical example of how theorising forms a key component in the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of professional knowledge for both mentors and mentees alike' (Jones & Straker, 2006:167).

Professional reflection to improve the effectiveness of the student's practice (benchmark 2.4.3) seems to be valued but arguably there is a theory-practice gap in that a number of the 'peripheral' benchmarks relate to education as an academic

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discipline. A more detailed examination of the reports of five students revealed that contained within several of the benchmark statements there was a 'void' with 28 of the 96 (29%) sub-elements not being commented on in any of the placements, for example:

- Curriculum - Know how to promote and support the individual development, well-being and social competence of the children in their class/register groups; and show commitment to raising these children's expectations of themselves and others (sub-element of 1.1.2).
- Professional values and personal commitment – Demonstrate that they respect and value children and young people as unique, whole individuals (sub-element of 3.1).

At one level it is perhaps not surprising, given the number of sub-elements, that there should be a 'void'; however, the extent of this was something of a surprise but nevertheless a useful source of learning.

Professional Skills and Abilities		Positive comment	Negative comment
2.1	Teaching and learning	644	92
2.1.1	Plan coherent, progressive teaching programmes which match their pupils' needs and abilities, and justify what they teach.	166	14
2.1.2	Communicate effectively, using a variety of media, to stimulate pupils and achieve the objectives of lessons.	152	51
2.1.3	Employ a range of teaching strategies and justify their approach.	193	18
2.1.4	Set expectations and a pace of work which make appropriate demands on all pupils.	133	9
2.1.5	Work effectively in co-operation with other	0	0

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Professional Skills and Abilities		Positive comment	Negative comment
	professionals, staff and parents in order to promote learning.		
2.2	Classroom organisation and management	474	64
2.2.1	Organise classes and lessons to ensure that all pupils are safe and productively employed when working individually, in groups or as a class.	212	4
2.2.2	Manage pupil behaviour fairly, sensitively and consistently by the use of appropriate rewards and sanctions and know when it is necessary to seek advice.	262	60
2.3	Pupil assessment	290	78
2.3.1	Understand and apply the principles of assessment, recording and reporting.	184	41
2.3.2	Use the results of assessment to evaluate and improve teaching and to improve standards of attainment.	106	37
2.4	Professional reflection and communication	202	37
2.4.1	Access and evaluate professionally relevant literature.	64	28
2.4.2	Construct and sustain reasoned and coherent arguments about educational matters and professional practices.	9	0
2.4.3	Reflect on and act to improve the effectiveness of their own practice and contribute to the processes of curriculum development and school development planning.	129	9

Table 2. Professional skills and abilities

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Professional Values and Personal Commitment		Positive comment	Negative comment
		386	0
3.1	Value and demonstrate a commitment to social justice, inclusion and protecting and caring for children.	74	0
3.2	Value themselves as growing professionals by taking responsibility for their professional learning and development.	248	0
3.2	Value, respect and show commitment to the communities in which they work.	64	0

Table 3. Professional values and personal commitments

The dominance of craft benchmarks

In the reports, craft benchmarks such as 1.1 – Curriculum, 2.1 – Teaching and Learning and 2.2 – Classroom Organisation and Management were well documented providing clear evidence that the school-based element of ITE is strongly focused on the practicalities of teaching reinforcing the sense that there is a theory-practice gap with professional practice knowledge – ‘the expertise and craft knowledge of school teachers’ (Ellis, 2009:111) - being privileged over theoretical knowledge. Eraut (2004:27) suggests that school-based mentors achieve this through employing strategies of ‘replication’ and ‘application’ rather than through the ‘interpretation of theory’. This pattern of replication is supported by comments from school-based mentors on how well their student ‘fits in’ to the school environment: ‘AA is a lovely girl who has worked very hard during her placement ... she has been a pleasure to work with’ (Primary 7 teacher).

‘BB had a very successful placement and is welcome to come back any time!’
(Primary 5 teacher).

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However, our study also suggests that SETs also privilege commenting upon craft knowledge competences.

Hopper (2001:212) raised a concern regarding comments related to 'fitting in' in that implicit within such comments is that notion that the student may find it difficult to question classroom practice or be innovative without encouragement and approval of the school-based mentor. Consequently, students' professional self-concept may be largely influenced by the context in which they are situated rather than by reflective processes of reconstructing professional knowledge (Ellis, 2009). Lave and Wenger (1991) similarly describe this in terms of the asymmetrical power relationships that influence situated identity formation in schools (Harrison & McKeon, 2008) in which a student's membership of the school community will be marginal or peripheral at the start until they adjust to the cultural values and norms of the school.

The most helpful reports were those which gave specific examples of how to make progress in attaining/becoming competent in areas related to professional practice knowledge through the identification of 'Next steps' for the students, for example: 'Think through your strategy for teacher talk and link to children's social learning through establishing a quality audience' (Tutor).

'Take responsibility for entire class by setting groups on task and managing transitions during lessons' (Primary 1 teacher).

'ICT is an area of the curriculum that CC should focus on. She should make herself aware of the 'Glow' website and its benefits regarding active learning and familiarise herself with available RM programmes' (Primary 5 teacher).

'Share, orally and in written form, the learning intentions and success criteria with the pupils' (Primary 6 teacher).

'Develop self evaluation of teaching and learning in terms of learning intentions and success criteria' (Primary 7 teacher).

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'Work on your scanning the whole class as you tend to focus exclusively on children in front of you' (Tutor comment).

Personal relationships

As a school-based mentor has a day-to-day personal and professional relationship with the student they tend to comment on the personality of the student (e.g., how pleasant they were, friendly, calm person, etc.) as well as making rather nebulous comments (e.g., keeping hours outside of class, working hard, etc.):

'DD is a pleasant, well-mannered student who has worked very hard during this placement' (Primary 5 teacher).

'EE is extremely committed, hard working and enthusiastic' (Primary 6 teacher).

Notwithstanding the fact that the reports examined were for students who had successfully completed the programme there is little by way of negative comment, or, framing this as a positive, comments that have a developmental focus. Perhaps positively framed comments are to be expected as the school-based mentors and students work side-by-side for several weeks and as such mentors are less likely to make comment which will 'hurt the student's feelings' (Hopper, 2001:217); however, this seems, in terms of the SITE benchmarks to detract slightly from the bigger issues of, for example, how each student understands and implements policy and theory into practice. Despite the 'vagueness' of such statements with respect to the SITE benchmarks they are nevertheless valuable in that they provide an important acknowledgement of the social-emotional aspects of teaching (Day & Leitch, 2001) that are embedded in working relationships.

Actions and discussion

The project sought to create formative support materials with a view to facilitating mutual professional development rather than just an 'examination of professional competence for summative evaluation purposes' (Smith, 2003:213). As a result of our findings three actions were identified:

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Action 1: In order to address the peripheral benchmark statements a structured learning conversation was piloted in the final school placement with a view to creating an evidential base on several sub-elements of the Standard. These triologic or three-way conversations are held asynchronously between the school-based mentor, SET and the student whilst on placement. In this context the duplicate model is no longer used. The structured conversation was facilitated through a semi-structured schedule of questions, differentiated by placement, which the SET uses when discussing each student's progress with both the class teacher and the student. Consequently, dialogue is being structured to make explicit aspects of the students' interaction with practice, for which there is observable data, which would normally not be commented upon despite being relevant in terms of the SITE benchmarks. The asynchronous nature means that different conversations take place in different places and at different times but all are focussed on supporting each student's understanding of their practice and to identify the 'Next Steps' necessary to ensure progress so creating a space for learning. The evidential base for the structured conversation carried out in the final placement covered the following benchmarks:

- Education systems and professional responsibilities - 1.2.1 and 1.2.2;
- Principles and perspectives – 1.3.1;
- Teaching and learning – 2.1.5;
- Professional values and personal commitment – 3.1 and 3.3.

These structured conversations will be rolled out next session across all of the school placements.

Action 2: The time spent on the PGDE programme cannot fully prepare students for practice nor can the time at University adequately prepare them for the idiosyncrasies of different school contexts. Yet we know from the socio-constructivist perspective on learning that learning is partly a social process with knowledge being

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situated in and emerging from different contexts differently (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989). Consequently, school placements provide students with a space for knowledge creation through the exploration of teaching and themselves as teachers in different contexts (Walkington, 2005). To support this a series of professional activities, differentiated by placement, were constructed which require students to inquire into practice (e.g., assessment practice, promoting positive behaviour and relationships, etc.) using literature, professional sources of information and focused professional dialogue with their school colleagues, particularly the school-based mentor, with a view to understanding practice in the context they find themselves in as well as implementing changes in their own professional practice. These professional activities help bridge the theory-practice divide (Jones & Straker, 2006) by creating spaces for reflection and learning conversations in order that students can negotiate shared understanding of practice with their mentors (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). These professional activities are located in each student's school file and as such they are accessible to the SET and school-based mentor. In addition, the professional activities allow students to identify points of convergence and divergence across contexts as some activities are explored in all placements (e.g., promoting positive relationships) whilst others are specific to particular placements (e.g., active learning in the early years setting). These professional activities cover the following benchmarks:

- Curriculum - 1.1.2 and 1.1.4;
- Principles and perspectives – 1.3.1 and 1.3.2;
- Teaching and learning – 2.1.3 and 2.1.5;
- Professional reflection and communication – 2.4.1 and 2.4.2;
- Professional values and personal commitment – 3.3.
- Different sets of professional actions are now in place for each placement.

Action 3: Each student is encouraged to engage in an ongoing process of Professional and Personal Development Planning (PPDP) by setting targets before entering each placement. These targets, which are directly related to the SITE

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benchmarks, are shared with the school-based mentor who is invited to provide feedback with respect to their student's progress towards meeting the targets set within the context they find themselves. This should provide each student with insights as to the 'way they do things' in the context they find themselves so providing a 'lens through which [teachers' practical knowledge] is viewed and interpreted' (Maynard, 2000:8). Perhaps 'feed forward' is more appropriate for the information provided is given whilst the student is engaged in practice and as such is in a position to act upon the information provided as:

'experienced teachers are able to help novice teachers learn teaching skills that novices cannot develop by themselves alone' (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988 cited in Wang, 2001:53).

These targets can evolve during the course of any given placement; however, there is an expectation that towards the middle (Interim Report) and end of the placement each student holds a learning conversation with their school-based mentor in order to identify and record their strengths and areas for development. The identification of strengths and areas for development is a shared responsibility (Timperley, 2001). This conversation provides an opportunity for each student to set new targets or revise existing targets, based on the advice that they receive, which can be taken on within the placement (i.e., following the Interim learning conversation) or onto the next placement so establishing a link across placements and educational establishments. Students take ownership of these learning conversations, through recording the main points discussed and writing up a short report for the teacher to sign. This involves each student reflecting in and on their practice and progress in setting and overtaking targets (Schön, 1991). These signed learning conversations enable each student to hold a 'parallel' learning conversation with their SET in order to discuss their progress and the targets necessary for development; consequently 'creating spaces for participants to bring their practice under critical scrutiny and for locating their voices in their experiences and in the experiences of others' (Orland-Barak, 2006:15). SETs can monitor these targets and clarify points of learning and/or development. Consequently, the conversations comprise a dialogue set which is based on a collaborative learning model offering the students, attempting to improve their practice, a way to engage their mentors (i.e., school-based mentors and SETs)

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in asynchronous collaborative interaction in order to challenge and assist the students' learning and development. The process of PPDP is fully in place and links to the Final Profile for the Induction Scheme which qualified students complete as part of their first substantive engagement with GTCS as they are eligible for registration.

The project recognises that evaluative feedback remains an important part of the students' school experience as both school-based mentors and SETs engage in evaluating the quality of teaching and learning that takes place in the students' classrooms. However, it is also vitally important that students are engaged in dialogue aimed at providing developmental feedback as well as encouraging reflection on practice. To this end the project has sought to increase the efficacy of mentoring practice through structured conversations, a process of enquiry along with personal and professional planning.

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