The Professional Development Needs of Teacher Educators in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and School-based Mentors in Schools

A report on a research study commissioned by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) and carried out by ESCalate Initial Teacher Education (ITE) at the University of Cumbria. The study presents an up to date analysis of the current development needs of teacher educators in Higher Education Institutions and school-based mentors.

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The Professional Development Needs of Teacher Educators in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and School-based Mentors in Schools.

1. Introduction

In recent years the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) provided by universities in England has undergone significant changes within a varying landscape related to the relationships between HEIs and schools. Prior to 1992 many teacher education courses had developed strong working links with local primary and secondary schools (DFE, 1992, 1993) through integration (Furlong, Whitty, Whiting, Miles, Barton, and Barrett, 1996). However during the 1990s these links were further reinforced by Government Circulars such as 9/92 which stated that higher education institutions and schools should form partnerships and run teacher education courses together. For example:

> The Government expects that partner schools and HEIs will exercise joint responsibility for the planning and management of courses and the selection, training and assessment of students.

> (DFE, 1992 paragraph 14).

Whilst the nature of the provision and delivery of initial teacher education has been the focus of much discussion and change, a review of the literature suggests that research investigating the experiences of initial teacher educators is limited (Korthagen, Loughran and Lunenberg, 2005).Instead, research studies have focused on the experiences of learners and their teachers within schooling contexts and teacher educators have been left to contribute towards their own professional development through self- study (see Zeicher, 1999; Bass, Anderson- Patton and Allender, 2002; Guilfoyle, Hamilton, Pinnegar and Placier, 1995). As Smith (2003: 202) concluded:

> There is a wealth of information about how teachers develop professionally…but little about how teacher educators develop professionally.

As a result of this dearth of research, writers such as Korthagen et al. (2005) and Furlong, Barton, Miles and Whitty (2000) for example have long called for the recognition of the importance of teacher educators because as Furlong et al. (2000:36) point out:

> What student teachers learn during their initial training is as much influenced by *who* is responsible for teaching them as it is by the content of the curriculum.

The importance of the professional development of teacher educators is highlighted by Murray (2006) whilst drawing on Turney and Wright (1990) who argue:

> The quality of teaching depends in large measure on the quality of the teachers; the quality of the teachers depends in large part upon the quality of their professional education; the quality of teacher education

depends in large measure on the quality of those who provide it, namely the teacher educators

(Turney and Wright, 1990 cited in Murray, 2006).

The professional development of teacher educators is essential for the continuing quality and standards of the teaching profession. Without successful Continuing Professional Development (CPD) there is a danger that there will be little opportunity for teacher educators to engage in dialogue and reflect upon their practice. As Day suggests, the value of the CPD for teacher educators is paramount:

Constantly challenged professionals are less likely to suffer from burnout tendencies and express a higher professional satisfaction

(Day, 1999 cited in Smith, 2003:204).

In addition to research literature, analysis of the data collected through ESCalate Initial Teacher Education (the Education Subject Centre of the Higher Education Academy, based at the University of Cumbria), evaluation forms completed by teacher educators themselves also highlights the need for a greater focus on professional development. In particular respondents wanted:

- 'research' and 'good practice' networks to be established to encourage contact and networking between people engaged in similar areas;
- Career path advice for teacher educators and the induction of new teacher educators;
- Ideas on areas of research that are needed in education;
- An evaluation of successful ITE provision in universities;
- More guidance on Masters level qualifications including Masters level PGCE and Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL) and also Every Child Matters and Multi-agency working.

Drawing conclusions from the ESCalate evaluation forms it is arguable that what is being demanded of teacher educators is growing, as new policies and initiatives are added to the requirements of initial teacher training. It is important to emphasise that teacher educators in HEIs are one part of a partnership with regard to the training of teachers; on school placements, school-based mentors play a vital role in student development. The growing importance of the need for professional development of teacher educators and school-based mentors is reinforced by evaluations of initiatives (NQT Survey, 2008; Rose Review, 2006; OfSTED, 2008a; OfSTED, 2008b for example). The NQT Survey (2008) asked respondents to assess the quality of their training and the results reveal that although the majority of the students were satisfied with the quality of it (85% of primary and 86% of secondary stating 'good' or 'very good'), issues relating to diversity and 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) were identified as areas that could be improved. Rose (2006) reviewed the teaching of reading in early years schooling and similarly to the NQT (2008) survey, this also had implications for the investigation into the professional development of teacher educators research field. Within the context of improving student teachers' understandings of teaching phonics Rose (2006) states 'initial, in-service training, and other professional development should be strengthened considerably' (p. 56) and this supports the notion that teacher educators need continual professional development in order to be able to support their trainees. Later OfSTED (2008a) concluded that initial teacher education providers have responded to the Rose Review well overall.

In this small-scale research study, commissioned by the Training and Development Agency for schools (TDA), we identify the current and future development needs of teacher educators based within HEIs and school-based mentors. This report on the findings of the study will make a contribution to the existing research and will also respond to the changing nature of ITE by answering the following questions:

- What are the current and future support needs of teacher educators in HEIs providing ITE for schools?
- What are the current and future support needs of student teacher mentors in schools?
- What are the important Continuing Professional Development issues as perceived by these members of staff?

2. Research Design

2.1 Introduction

This study which identifies the professional development needs of staff who teach and support students in the school sector is a small-scale study within a short time period. The main aim of the research was to collect qualitative data using a survey and a series of focus groups. The combination of methods used in this design enables us to provide information on the current challenges, opportunities and issues as perceived by teacher educators working in universities and schools. It also enables us to identify what continuing professional development initiatives will help them to meet such challenges, opportunities and issues. The survey which was distributed online and by post enabled us to capture responses from a wider range of respondents and the focus groups allowed us to discuss the issues of continuing professional development in much greater detail.

This section of the report outlines the following:

- The methods used to generate and collect the data;
- The sampling of participants;
- The data analysis process.

2.2 Methods of Data Collection

The findings presented in this report were generated and collected using:

- A questionnaire distributed via an online and postal survey;
- Focus groups.

The research instruments were influenced by previous ESCalate research which had identified areas of interest amongst the ITE community. The survey and focus group data were collected during the period of three months between November 2008 and January 2009.

2.2.1 The Survey

We chose to administer a survey because a survey is a useful way of collecting information in a structured way often without the presence of the researcher (Wilson and McLean, 1994). The questionnaire included closed questions to collect nominal data such as the type of institution and the sector where the respondents worked, and open-ended ones designed to generate rich and in-depth data (Bailey, 1994). As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:320) state a smaller sample size means questionnaires can be 'less structured, more open and word-based'. As well as enabling respondents to reply freely it makes them suitable for investigating complex issues (Cohen et al., 2007; Barchard and Christensen, 2007) as Cohen et al. (2007: 330) state:

> It is the open-ended responses that might contain the 'gems' of information that otherwise might not be caught in the questionnaire.

The survey was distributed online using Bristol Online Survey (www.survey.bris.ac.uk) with a covering letter outlining the aims of the research and ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. The response from staff in schools to the online survey was lower than anticipated and therefore, to ensure greater accessibility for school staff, the survey was also distributed by post. A covering letter provided details of the research and each survey included a stamped addressed envelope to return the completed questionnaire.

2.2.2 The Focus Groups

In addition to the survey, focus groups were employed to ensure a collective rather than individual view (Cohen et al., 2007:376). The format of focus groups allows people to hear and discuss their own and others' beliefs and opinions about an issue (see Krueger, 1994), continuing professional development in the case of this study. Open-ended questions enabled the generation and collection of rich and in-depth data over a short period of time (Krueger, 1988; Robson, 2002). As Krueger (1994 p. 7) highlights, open- ended questioning allows people lots of 'opportunity to comment, to explain, to share experiences and attitudes as opposed to the structured and directive interview that is lead by the interviewer'.

2.3 Sampling

The respondents of the online and postal survey were teacher educators working as tutors in universities and headteachers and school-based mentors in schools. The surveys were distributed throughout England and we received 108 responses (32 from university staff and 76 from school staff).

Table 1

Institution	Number of Respondents
University	32
Primary School	37
Secondary School	39
Total	108

We were expecting a higher number of responses however given the short time period, increasing work-loads and the festive season the number of respondents is perhaps not surprising (see Hoinville and Jowell, 1978).

The focus group participants were also university tutors and school-based mentors and the focus groups took place at a university in the North-West of England. In total we held four focus groups as follows:

- Two focus groups with ITE tutors;
- One focus group with mentors based in Primary Schools (including Early Years);
- One focus group with mentors based in Secondary Schools (including KS5 and 14-19).

A total of 15 university tutors were invited to take part in the focus group discussions and of those 9 people participated in the research. In the school sector 22 school-based mentors were invited to take part and 4 took participated in the focus group.

In each group the participants' amount of experience varied:

- The range of ITE tutors included partnership zone managers, senior lecturers and lecturers;
- The school-based mentors were from different types of school (pupil intake and socio-economic positioning) and some had had more experience than others within this role.

2.4 Ethics and confidentiality

For the survey, in the covering letter the respondents were given information regarding the purpose of the study and how the information would be used. The respondents were assured of total confidentiality. The Bristol online survey tool does not reveal the name or contact details of the respondents. For the respondents who answered via the postal alternative, confidentiality was assured as the replies were anonymous and there was no way of discovering the names or addresses of the senders.

In the focus groups, the facilitator asked the participants to state their names and job title at the beginning of the session. This was to enable the transcriber to distinguish each participant on the recordings and to give an insight into their experience in their role. Participants were assured that the recordings were anonymised at the transcription stage.

2.5 Data Analysis

2.5.1 Analysis of Survey Data

The data generated by the survey was analysed in two parts. Although, as we indicated above the aim of the study was to generate primarily qualitative data, the nominal data was analysed using software provided by Bristol Online Survey (e.g. type of institution and age range). The responses to the qualitative open-ended questions were coded according to themes outlined by the researcher. The first stage was to reduce the data into a form suitable for analysis where the responses were edited for errors; completeness, accuracy and uniformity (Cohen et al., 2007). Following this, responses were grouped according to type of institution and the following factors identified by the researchers:

- school placement learning;
- assessment;
- Masters level learning and teaching;
- school mentor support;
- partnership arrangements;
- course content and curriculum;
- Every Child Matters (ECM) and multi-agency working;
- balancing the ideal against the reality of working in schools today;
- and the longer term needs of teacher educators.

The responses by type of institution were then compared between institutions (e.g. universities, primary and secondary schools) to investigate differences and similarities of the challenges and opportunities which had been identified.

2.5.2 Analysis of Focus Group Data

The focus group recordings were listened to and key sections were transcribed. At this stage of the analysis the participants' names and some stories retelling examples were omitted from the recordings to ensure participants' anonymity. Initially the transcripts were analysed separately in order to gain an in-depth picture of the focus group holistically. This involved the researcher highlighting factors previously identified as key to continuing professional development of teacher educators (ESCalate) and other themes which emerged as relevant following the participants' discussions (e.g. time, funding and opportunities outside of CPD). Then each focus group transcript was cross-sectionally analysed (Mason, 2002) with the others to explore any differences and similarities across the schools and university.

3. The Findings

3.1 The current and future support needs of teacher educators in HEIs providing Initial Teacher Education for schools

3.1.1 Introduction

This section reports on teacher educators' experiences of challenges, issues and opportunities during the November 2008 – January 2009 period of the academic year. It includes qualitative information collected from an online survey that was distributed to ITE university staff in England and from two focus groups with ITE staff lecturing at a university in the North-West of England.

3.1.2 Survey data

This section reports data collected from a survey completed by teacher educator respondents working within Initial Teacher Education throughout England. The findings provide a qualitative overview of the challenges, issues and opportunities teacher educators experience and in particular the following:

- school placement learning;
- assessment;
- Masters level learning and teaching;
- school mentor support;
- partnership arrangements;
- course content and curriculum;
- Every Child Matters (ECM) and multi-agency working;
- balancing the ideal against the reality of working in schools today;
- and the longer term needs of teacher educators.

The teacher educators were asked what particular issues, new policies and changing practices are creating challenges and opportunities for you and your colleagues and what Continuing Professional Development (CPD) provision could help you and your colleagues meet these. The challenges most often identified by the respondents were:

- Communication between schools and HEIs and also between colleagues across disciplines/ subjects;
- Challenges with placements as schools are reluctant to take on associate/trainee teachers because of continued changes to curriculum and assessment most years (especially in Sciences);
- The changing nature of education (especially expanding curriculum and introduction of new policies, agendas, frameworks);
- Changes in curriculum: Preparation for: new Diplomas, New curriculum at KS3 and expanding curriculum at KS4, GCSE 2009 changes, New A2 Level in Sept '09;
- Cramming everything into PGCE year (eg; new KS3, New AS/A2, new GCSE, Whole curriculum dimensions, opening minds and other 'initiatives';

- Introduction of new policies, for example what do 'Every Child Matters' and 'ROSE Review' mean for students training in schools/educational settings.

The respondents identified the following possible ideas for CPD to help them and their colleagues meet the challenges and opportunities:

- Greater communication and clear definitions of roles for those working as teacher educators;
- To be kept up to date with what schools are doing;
- The opportunity to share 'good practice' between universities and schools;
- Greater understanding and awareness of other agencies and the possibility of working together to 'develop appropriated teacher education';
- Subject-specific training and time to allow for training;
- Senior Management supporting/encouraging attendance of available training courses;
- Subject-specific training and raising awareness of new, developing and expanding initiatives (especially with introduction of Masters in Teaching and Learning).

Respondents were also asked what particular challenges and opportunities face teacher educators and trainers with regards to students and particular areas of the initial teacher education programme. In the sections that follow we will highlight what these are and what CPD the teacher educators suggested could help.

3.1.2.a. School-Placement Learning

Analysis of the survey data shows that teacher educators said they find the following main issues a challenge:

- Consistency of demonstrating learning across the provision
- Differences in 'good practice' between that modelled in HEIs and in schools and also differences between schools
- Finding enough lessons to give students adequate and valuable experience
- Lack of placements
- Level of knowledge of school based mentors
- Practice and training of school based mentors
- Connections and communications between schools and HEIs
- Shared expectations between HEI staff and school staff

The most common response amongst the 32 respondents was that the school placement learning was hindered because of a lack of communication between Initial Teacher Education staff in universities and schools (mentioned by 34 participants). The university tutors said they felt frustrated as summarised by this teacher educator:

'It's difficult because we aren't always aware what our partnership schools are doing to assess students' learning whilst on placement. It's likely that schools have different practices to us and these might differ from school to school too.'

Another respondent pointed out that the lack of communication was also problematic at times because it meant; 'Enormous differences between schools and therefore the learning opportunities available to students vary greatly'.

Another challenge that faced teacher educators was a lack of schools and placements. The respondents (7) said that finding school based placements presented a challenge for them because schools did not always address the new curriculum or the requirements of their trainee teachers. For example, one respondent stated it was a challenge 'getting placements to suit 14-19 agenda'.

The teacher educators suggested that the following CPD ideas to help them meet the challenges and opportunities:

- Funding to continually support/train mentors;
- Information and resource sharing of 'good-practice';
- Projects working alongside school-based colleagues;
- Working with colleagues from other HEIs in open and non-competitive ways.

Central to these CPD ideas is the notion of developing communication in order to collaborate and share 'good practice' between universities and partnership schools. In particular respondents were keen for funding to be invested into projects looking at the best ways to create these communication links and to disseminate this information as illustrated in the following response:

'It seems to me that CPD implies someone is telling us what to do. Since no-one that I know of knows the answer the model of CPD needs to be more interactive and connected to what we do. Courses rarely deliver this.'

3.1.2.b. Assessment

Analysis of the survey data shows that teacher educators said they find the following main issues a challenge:

- Teacher educators need examples of 'good practice' to be showcased to each other HEIs. For example 'How are institutions using the new Ofsted grading and framework to assess trainees?'
- Grading is not always perceived as helpful to trainees by mentors;
- Challenge of retaining rigour and standards whilst making it manageable for students and staff;
- Relevance and meaning for academic assessment and link to professional assessment;
- Subjectivity of assessors;
- Time to manage it/ fit everything in;
- Assessment means there is a lack of opportunity to develop real depth with cross- curricular thinking
- Questions relating to the role of the tutor in assessment as methods vary.

The respondents commented that, as assessment changed, it was difficult for them to always know what the role of the tutor was in the process. One teacher educator said for example:

'The number and the variety of assessments has changed and there is much more emphasis on self assessment/audits and action plans. The role of the tutor will change with more emphasis on monitoring and advising.'

There was also a feeling expressed from all the teacher educators that it was challenging to achieve what one respondent summarised as 'a balance of appropriate, meaningful and timely assessments'. It was suggested that it needs a more holistic approach than that currently in place.

The teacher educators suggested that the following CPD ideas to help them meet the challenges and opportunities:

- Comparison/levelling of examples of students on placement e.g. maybe pair up with others or through video clips;
- Collegiate sharing of ideas and approaches;
- Scheduled consultations with colleagues and school-based partners;
- Discussion and communication with schools and other HEIs. Time to be able to do this and attend national events and meetings.

3.1.2.c. Masters level learning and teaching

The teacher educators who responded to the survey were also asked about any challenges, issues or opportunities regarding the introduction of Masters level learning and teaching. The main responses were the following:

- Ensuring 'M Levelness';
- Finding time to ensure input of M level writing/ appropriate research skills and ethics for research to be conducted (in schools);
- Tutor understanding of what M level entails and really means;
- Ensuring M Level is academically rigorous;
- Will TDA/Government respond to advice from HEIs and schools to also ensure rigour, well-funded provision built on existing quality-assured MA provision which already exists?;
- Managing workload with a PGCE;
- Will it really raise standards?;
- Some trainees may require more support than others- particular concern for TDA funding to help set up more support for maths and science trainees but this really can refer to all subjects;
- Difficulties recruiting staff with research who can teach at M level;
- What are the expectations of students studying M-level degree?

When the respondents were asked what CPD they felt could help them and their colleagues they suggested:

- Ways to be aware and try to alleviate the extra pressure this will put on students;
- CPD for school-based staff – and communicative links with university sector to ensure clarity and consistency;
- Funding from TDA to help establish better provision and support;
- More information about MTL (Masters in Teaching and Learning);
- Moderation of M level marking;
- Sharing of 'good practice'.

It was also mentioned that it was important to have the time to ensure all staff have the opportunity to work on Masters courses and develop their personal skills. The respondents also stated that funding would help, as shown in this example:

> 'Funding by the TDA to help us to set up more support for some individual trainees who find writing at Masters level a challenge - particularly the maths and science trainees.'

3.1.2.d. School Mentor support

The teacher educators were also asked about challenges and opportunities or issues related to school mentor support. The respondents gave the following comments:

- Schools and universities understanding their roles in the mentoring process;
- Ensuring high quality;
- Geographical challenges of face-to-face mentor/teacher;
- Getting mentors to understand their roles in developing 21st century teachers;
- Lack of mentors' readiness to challenge students and move them on in their training;
- Time for mentors-mentees to meet;
- Significant issues in terms of training and expectations. Especially with MTL and assessment.

The majority of the respondents commented that the changing nature of the curriculum presented challenges in terms of training:

> 'There are implications for Mentor Training both with Beginning and Experienced Mentors. All need to help trainees to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of personalised learning for children utilising a creative approach to enthuse and motivate'

> 'there are so many new initiatives it's making the job harder to fit in'.

The respondents suggested the following CPD could be helpful to meet such challenges and opportunities:

- Funding for continual support/training of mentors
- HEIs to offer INSET in new developments?
- Training of school mentor support
- Sharing/ communication of 'good practice' between schools and HEIs and working alongside each other
- Whole school mentor training

3.1.2.e. Partnership Arrangements

As was the case with the school placement learning and school- based mentors, the majority of the teacher educators said time and a lack of communication between universities and schools were the main challenges to effective partnership arrangements. They also gave the following responses:

- A lack of cohesion between HEIs;

- Levels of commitment to partnership work;
- The need to extend work with schools (in addition to sending students to them);
- Insufficient scheduled time working together;
- Need to be localised where possible - clustering groups of schools to share 'good practice';
- Problems at school end e.g. pulling out at last minute, changing providers and not sending mentors to training;
- Lack of places.

The respondents stated that the following CPD could help with these challenges:

- Sharing of 'good practice';
- Collaborative (school-based/university based) mentor training to identify research opportunities and to develop these;
- Ways to help find school placements;
- Time required building relationships.

3.1.2. f. Course content/ curriculum

Participants in the survey were also asked the course content and curriculum. They identified the following challenges, issues and opportunities:

- Time to fit everything into one year;
- Balance between the amount of curriculum and pedagogical development trainees undertake;
- Ensuring cohesion and progression between modules and placements;
- Making the curriculum 'fit for purpose' in 21st century (especially with regards to introduction of so many strategies;
- Perceived lack of research-based theory behind national strategy;
- Issues with Ofsted and diplomas;
- Too much focus on curriculum. There needs to be more focus on individual needs and personalisation- evaluation/reflection/ critical thinking;
- Difficulty in balancing all demands.

The respondents stated that the following CPD could help:

- Keeping up-to-date with changes;
- Need for direct and succinct training days to cover critical issues e.g. Primary National Strategy;
- Opportunities for school staff CPD;
- Training for diplomas;
- Sharing of good-practice.

The teacher educators also suggested that they should be included in preparation and planning for new curriculum and initiative ideas as summarised in the following quotations:

> [There should be] 'Preparation for a revised National Curriculum for schools [and] Development days in which collaboration between former

subject division staff is further developed (working with revalidated programmes).'

'The community to work together to ensure we are not forced into an unquestioning compliance.'

3.1.2. g. Every Child Matters/ Multi-agency working

The respondents were also asked to comment on any challenges, opportunities or issues associated with Every Child Matters (ECM) and multi-agency work. The participants stated the following issues:

- Opinion in that some feel it is more embedded in practice than others who commented it seems to be 'seen as an add-on rather than something integral to practice'- 'it is a bolt on with little depth of thought or rigour' – Some say students see it in practice and others feel they don't get this experience and it is difficult for them to get involved;
- Difficulty in developing shared language across practices/ professions
- Lack of consistency of provision;
- There needs to be more integration across courses e.g. nursing;
- Unconvincing policy base;
- Unbalance between work HEIs and schools do on this – Schools 'are being slow to catch up'.

The respondents said the following CPD could help them to overcome these:

- Continued updating/ sharing of resources – esp. between schools and universities;
- Cross- faculty training days – sharing of expertise through common themes;
- Good practice examples on the TDA good practice website;
- How do we achieve 'good practice' in terms of implementation of ECM/ multi-agency across sessions/subjects.

As was the case with many of the topics featured in the survey, the majority of the respondents suggested that more training would help them to meet the challenges and opportunities, for example 'cross-faculty training days and sharing expertise through common themes' . Other respondents however also pointed out that it was sharing ideas rather than training which was needed; [it's] 'not so much CPD as collegiate sharing of ideas and approaches'.

3.1.2. h. Balancing the ideal against the reality of working in schools today

The teacher educators were also asked about balancing the ideal against the reality of working in schools today. The majority of respondents commented that this was a very important question which 'definitely needs addressing':

- The problem of developing more student-centred/problem-solving/ collaborative opportunities in universities;

- Creating a balance between schools and universities of the various needs of schools;
- Ensuring communication between schools and universities;
- The needs of pupils must rise up the list of priorities;
- Trainee teachers need time to acclimatise to the sometimes unexpected work level within teaching – time needs to be spent preparing trainees for this;
- Working hard to build on partnerships and cross boundaries between academia and the classroom e.g. practitioner research projects for students

Similarly to the other sections, the respondents were asked to suggest what CPD provision could help them and their colleagues to meet the challenges and opportunities they outlined. The following comments are typical of their responses:

- Collaborative development of more 'real-life' situations in universities;
- Dialogue/communication with partnership colleagues;
- Swapping of experiences for teacher educators and school-based colleagues;
- Preparation in preparing students to become resilient practitioners and professional at all times;
- Sharing 'good practice'. For example, TDA to provide funding to create project with mentors/schools;
- Essential to develop links with schools to be able to 'spend time in the sector to keep a flavour of what it is really like'.

3.1.2. i. Any other challenges

The respondents were also asked to identify any other challenges that were not represented within the survey and gave the following responses:

- Changing school profile: Declining pupils/fewer schools impacts on placement opportunities;
- Finding time to address new initiatives on ITE courses;
- Research into teaching opportunities to maintain 'edge';
- Diversity/ inclusively issues around supporting students, for example International students.

3.1.2. j. Longer-term needs

The final question in the survey asked teacher educators to outline any future and longer-term needs. They gave the following responses:

- Creating a more uniform structure between institutions;
- Developing links between schools and universities;
- ICT and the effects on L&T strategies;
- Provision of support and time for colleagues;
- Research Activity support;
- Research and publication support;
- Ensuring research/ teaching balance.

In this section I have identified the perceived challenges, opportunities and issues of teacher educators working in universities. The qualitative findings show that there is a need for greater communication and collaboration with schools and other partner

agencies and institutions. In the following section I will identify the current CPD needs of nine teacher educators as discussed within two focus groups.

3.1.3 Focus Group Data

This section reports data collected from two focus groups with Initial Teacher Educators in a university in the North-West of England. The findings provide a qualitative overview of the challenges, issues and opportunities teacher educators experience. During the focus groups the discussions included the following key areas:

- current perceived challenges, opportunities and needs by the educators;
- school placement learning;
- assessment;
- Masters level learning and teaching;
- school mentor support;
- partnership arrangements;
- course content and curriculum;
- Every Child Matters (ECM) and multi-agency working;
- balancing the ideal against the reality of working in schools today;
- and the longer term needs of teacher educators.

Generally the ITE staff reported that they felt supported in their profession. They also raised some interesting issues regarding CPD and the delivery of it in relation to their needs as teacher educators. Drawing on the key areas identified above, in this section I will report what the teacher educators identified as their current and future support needs.

In addition to discussions regarding the key areas outlined above, there were underlying key issues which emerged in conversation. These included:

- the interface between 'training' and 'educating';
- strengthening communication and collaboration between teacher educators and staff involved with ITE in schools;
- tensions between theory, policies and pedagogical practice;
- tensions relating to time, trust and autonomy;
- and what is involved in the process of becoming a teacher.

It was also interesting to note that the teacher educators valued discussing these issues in the focus group- for the majority of them this was the first time they had been given the opportunity to discuss these kinds of issues with fellow teacher educators.

A cross- sectional analysis of the focus groups revealed that these issues were relevant to the majority of the areas and will be discussed further in the following sections.

3.1.3a Current perceived challenges, opportunities and needs

The participants discussed that being able to be up-to-date and possibly 'one step ahead of student teachers' was important to them. In particular, participants in both

focus groups were concerned with their knowledge of what was happening in schools 'at the ground and policy levels' and relevant research literature, policy documents and reviews related to primary and secondary education and ITE. They identified time as the important factor to enable them to try to resolve these current challenges as illustrated in the following quotation:

> 'we need time to go and see and work with our schools, for example to see how things develop from the ground upwards and be more involved in what is happening in schools'.

The participants also identified that the building of stronger communication and collaboration links between HEIs and schools could support them in strengthening their knowledge of what is happening in schools. As one participant said, 'building these [links] could enable us to speak the language of headteachers and staff working in schools'.

Another tension that was central to the teacher educators' perceptions of what was currently challenging concerned the differences between policies and practices. As with the challenge of constraints regarding their knowledge of what was happening in schools, the participants agreed that future continuing professional development should involve the strengthening of communications, collaborations and relationships between schools and HEIs. Another point they raised was 'whether it is a question of CPD or about establishing a community?'

3.1.3b. School Placement Learning: 'a methodological mess of pottage'

The teacher educators highlighted that this was a key area to be addressed in CPD. The ways in which lecturers and their colleagues in schools assess student teachers' learning whilst on placements was an area of concern. In both focus groups the participants stated that there was no consistent way of recording what their students are learning. They suggested that this could also be because there is a lack of shared vision between the teacher educators working in the university and those based in schools. As one teacher educator pointed out, 'the key to effective school placement learning is shared vision'. Within the focus group discussions they also identified the need to develop and strengthen links with schools in order to change the philosophy of some schools and encourage them to engage in partnerships. It was suggested that the TDA should encourage schools and HEIs to work effectively so that dialogue can happen to consider 'what schools can offer HEIs and what HEIs can offer schools'. One way in which this could be achieved is through funding to research the opportunity for HEI and school staff to create their own community of CPD with schools in partnerships.

3.1.3c. School mentor support and Partnership arrangements

The staff in both focus groups identified tensions between HEIs and schools regarding the partnership of initial teacher education. They said they were often frustrated with the lack of communication between themselves and partner schools as illustrated in the following quotation:

> 'I think we're fed-up with the lack of joined-up-thinking and staff in HEIs having to make decisions without knowing what's happening on the ground in schools.'

From this it seems that there needs to be better communications between HEI staff and those involved in schools and policy-making so that teacher educators have a better idea of what is happening within schools.

In addition to creating such a community, the importance of raising the profile of school-based mentors was also suggested. Individuals in both focus groups agreed school-based mentors should receive recognition and accreditation for the work they do within the ITE partnership.

3.1.3d. Assessment

As was the case with school placement learning, the groups of teacher educators highlighted that the assessment of students can be problematic for these reasons:

- The subjectivity of assessors means that it is difficult to assess students and to make valid judgements about what is a 'good' and 'very good' student;
- Current assessment processes and methods are too bureaucratic with 'too many boxes to tick. It's too meaningless';
- A tension between theory and practice.

They commented that the tension between the wide range of assessment methods students are taught and the narrow selection they experience in the practice of their own assessment could become increasingly problematic with the introduction of the MTL. Rather than being 'too many boxes to tick [and]...meaningless' they stated that assessment should be embedded in practice and representative of lifelong development.

3.1.3e. Masters level learning and teaching

The participants mainly interpreted this section as concerning the introduction of the MTL, although some of the comments are applicable to other Masters qualifications for teachers. They perceived many challenges regarding its introduction in Autumn 2009. The main challenges concerned the delivery of the MTL and the progression of the learners. The teacher educators agreed that the delivery could be a challenge because some of them may not have studied at Masters level themselves and they felt that this could disadvantage them in the teaching of it. They also agreed that the complexities of learners and learners' progression rates need to be carefully considered – students do not all progress at the same time and some of the student teachers may not be suited to Masters study – 'students might make great teachers but may not be able to work at M-Level and instead it will create more stress for them on what is already an intensive programme'.

One group also raised concerns about the 'watering down of the Masters level'. They suggested they were worried that it might lose rigour and validity and expressed the need for staff within the sector to have the autonomy to be able to say what Masters level is and to have a say in what the programme modules will look like. One participant also raised the concern that the provision and delivery of the MTL could divide HEIs into different types – 'the traditional research PG study and the MTL, possibly 2nd class route'. As with the majority of the issues discussed in the focus groups, the participants said that there was a need for professional dialogue amongst colleagues and other professionals regarding the Masters.

3.1.3f. Course content and curriculum: 'Who are we? What are we? And why are we doing what we're doing?'

The participants identified a tension within Initial Teacher Education between the 'training of students' and the 'educating' of students. They raised the issue that they are told to train student teachers but that they should also be educating them as professionals to prepare them for lifelong learning. They said this is particularly pertinent given the introduction of the MTL in 2009 and issue of reflective practice. A participant used the analogy of a dentist, or a doctor as illustrated in the following quote:

> 'They will be trained and in addition they will be educated about the human body, to put it very simply, why should teachers be any different? Some aspects of training are better suited to schools rather than HEIs and there needs to be better and clearer understanding about what we do, how and where we do it.'

3.1.3g Every Child Matters (ECM) and multi-agency working

The participants in both the focus groups highlighted the need to make such policies and initiatives more relevant to everyday teaching practice suggesting 'ECM and other initiatives need to come alive'. At the moment the provision of ECM and multi-agency working varies and the teacher educators suggested this needs to be improved in both the university and partnership schools. To achieve this they suggested it would be helpful for them to have all the current initiatives information distilled so that they could easily identify the key issues. As with a number of the other cases, they also suggested that it is essential to build stronger communication links with colleagues in partnership schools.

3.1.3h. Balancing the ideal against the reality of working in schools today

The teacher educators in both focus groups raised this question summarised by Jo; 'Is there a danger of ITE having methodological dissonance with what is happening in schools?' Central to their discussions about the current challenges is this notion of unfamiliarity with what is happening in schools. The teacher educators pointed out that communication and collaboration with school-based mentors would improve the practice of educating trainee teachers as the following quote illustrates:

> There is a *need* to encourage schools and HEIs to build and ensure a shared vision in terms of the process and profession of teaching.

3.1.3i. The longer term needs of teacher educators

The teacher educators discussed how the nature of ITE is continually changing and that this makes it difficult to establish what they need. However, they identified the following longer term needs:

- The acknowledgement and appreciation of work that those involved in ITE provision do (including school based mentors);

- More opportunity and communication links to enable discussion with colleagues based in HEIs and schools;

- Funding for research (could also be part of Masters) to involve student teachers in the researching of developing new ways of working;

- Consider whether current CPD delivery always meets staff learning needs-create new ways of delivering CPD; *'CPD should be more about opportunity because we have the expertise, we have these things in place, we need time, the flexibility, the funding, we need the acknowledgement'.*

3.1.4 Conclusions

In this section the challenges and opportunities and current development needs of teacher educators working in HEIs have been identified. Analysis of survey and focus group data show that the majority of the challenges are associated with communication problems between teacher educators and school-based mentors and other education centres. Rather than disseminating CPD workshops and seminars, the findings illustrate that these teacher educators perceive that funding and extra resources such as time and research would be more helpful to enable them to meet the challenges they are currently facing. They said that they want the opportunity to develop their independence and autonomy as teacher educators. For example, to build stronger communication and collaboration links between university departments and partnership schools. The participants also suggested they needed funding for time to visit their colleagues in schools to develop their knowledge and understanding of teaching practice within schools; 'Time is what we need rather than seminars'. The educators identified research is needed to explore what they need to do, how and where to do it like the training of NHS doctors, nurses and dentists. Drawing on the focus group discussion, there is also a need for more constructive alignment between the purpose, assessment and input of the MTL. The participants highlighted how the MTL is expected to encourage reflective thinking and expand their knowledge and understanding of educational theory yet their learning maybe hindered by limited assessments or a lack of experience due a lack of communication between universities and schools.

3.2 The current and future support needs of school-based mentors

In this section we will report on the school based mentors' experiences of challenges, issues and opportunities generated and collected during the same period of the academic year (November 2008- January 2009). It includes qualitative information collected from an online and postal survey that was sent to primary and secondary schools in England and from two focus groups with school-based mentors. The focus groups were categorised according to level of schooling e.g. primary (with early years) or secondary (with 14-19).

3.2.1 Survey data

This section reports data collected from a survey completed by respondents working within Initial Teacher Education as school-based mentors and headteachers throughout England. The findings provide a qualitative overview of the challenges, issues and opportunities school-based mentors experience and in particular the following:

- school placement learning;
- assessment;
- Masters level learning and teaching;
- school mentor support;
- partnership arrangements;
- course content and curriculum;
- Every Child Matters (ECM) and multi-agency working;
- balancing the ideal against the reality of working in schools today;
- and the longer term needs of school-based mentors.

The sample of school-based mentors and headteachers were asked what particular issues, new policies and changing practices are creating challenges and opportunities for you and your colleagues and what Continuing Professional Development (CPD) provision could help you and your colleagues meet these. The responses were categorised according to Primary or Secondary level schooling (indicated by (P) and (S)). The challenges most often identified by the respondents were:

- Timetabling of diploma (S)
- Greater flexibility in NC (S)
- Introduction of Diploma (S)
- Assessing students' progress (S)
- Specialist diploma (S)
- Increased number of trainees with specific needs (S)
- Curriculum changes and syllabus changes at ks3, 4 &5 (S)
- Mentorship training (S 14-19)
- New ITT standards (S 14-19)
- 14-19 cohesion (S 14-19)

- Ensuring coherence in assessment/guidance when a range of providers educate trainees (S 14-19)
- A drive for a more creative curriculum (P)
- Extended school provision (P)
- Assessment Policy and Practice (APP) introduction (P)
- The possibility of changing to a skills based curriculum (P)
- New EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) curriculum (P)
- Increasing expectations of parents (P)
- links between performance management, CPD and achievement (P)
- Paperwork concerned with trainees e.g. observations (P)
- Implementation of ROSE Review (P)

The school-based mentors were asked to identify ideas for CPD to help them and their colleagues meet the challenges and opportunities:

- Establishing and recognising the role of the mentor (S)
- Current practice in teacher training – examples of good practice in supporting trainee teachers in schools (S)
- Mentorship training (S)
- Assessment for learning (S)
- Time (S)
- Adoption of extended creative curriculum (P)
- Hour to incorporate extended school agenda (P)
- Training bodies to realise/ understand the pressure schools are under – 'paperwork is only valuable if it serves a purpose' (P)
- Time (P)
- Funding for research with universities to develop best shared practice (P)

As with the teacher educators in universities, those involved with initial teacher education based in schools were also asked what particular challenges and opportunities face trainers with regards to students and particular areas of the initial teacher education programme. In the sections that follow I will highlight what these are and what CPD the school-based mentors suggested could help.

3.2.1a. School-Placement Learning

The respondents identified the following main issues as challenging to school-placement learning:

- Issue of capacity and making the best use of the resources available (S)
- The training schools take most of the suitably qualified teachers (S)
- Potential for pupils' learning to be harmed/impaired by unsuitable trainees (S)
- Some placements are too long (e.g. 9 weeks is too disruptive) (S)
- Avoiding drops in standards whilst student teachers are learning (S)
- Time to spend with the students (S)
- Suitability of school staff/ mentors (S)
- Different styles in different institutions (S)
- Finding enough classes to put students into (S 14-19)
- Finding mentors for them (S 14-19)
- Challenge – finding time to spend with students for planning and discussing teaching styles/methods (P)

- Opportunities – to provide time to trainees/students to work with small groups (P)
- Quality of students and their HEI (P)
- Willingness of student to be receptive to advice (P)
- Putting teaching theory into practice (P)
- Assisting students with challenging pupils as some students have not been adequately trained in dealing with this (P)

The school-based mentors suggested the following CPD ideas to help them meet the challenges and opportunities:

- DVD would be useful to help with staff training (S)
- University tutors could spend some time in schools to catch up with the reality and share the theory they give to the student learners (S)
- Online/ 'hard copy' materials (especially regarding subject knowledge for trainees) (S)
- Networking between schools (S)
- CPD for new mentors (S)
- Knowledge for most staff of the new ITT assessment (S 14-19)
- More funding per student in schools (P)
- Before students enter placements/ while they are on placements they need good intuitive lectures which prepare them for what lies ahead – important to include (P)
- More discussions and debates about this (P)
- Closer liaison with provider and school (P)
- More CPD related to evidencing standards (P)

3.2.1b Assessment

The school-based mentors were also asked for their response to challenges and opportunities that they felt had an impact on the assessment of students. The participants identified the following issues:

- The turning of assessment of students into personalised educational programmes – there's only a problem when students find course seriously difficult or they are unwilling to accept advice (S)
- Trainee teachers are not in a position to make value judgements about levels and progress (S)
- Competence and consistency in meeting standards vs. evidence gathering (S)
- Quality assurance of school placement grading (S)
- Ability to sufficiently evidence meeting standards in a short placement (S)
- Modularisation of assessment and many people completing assessments (S)
- HEIs should make sure students understand the purposes of assessment (P)
- Ensuring teachers are equipped to assess students (P)

Their responses show that these school-based mentors are mainly concerned with the subjectivity and competency of assessors, whether placements are adequate to evidence assessment and to ensure that their trainee teachers understand the purposes of assessment.

They identified the following CPD could be useful to try and meet these challenges:

- Documentation of standards (S)
- Consultants/ advisors to act in question & answers capacity alongside assessors and mentors (S)
- Not CPD, just practical help needed to deal with increasing paperwork demands (S)
- CPD between universities and trainers regarding first placement expectations, especially with meeting the standards (S)
- School assessment policies need to be consistent (P)
- Inset training on effective observation (P)
- Release time for students and teachers to work together (P)

As was the case with responses to many of these key facets of Initial Teacher Education, these show that school-based mentors would like the opportunity to build CPD with universities, and would like their student teachers to engage in discussions about assessment with them.

3.2.1c. Masters level learning and teaching

Similarly to the responses from teacher educators working in universities, the Masters level in Teaching and Learning was of concern to those working in schools. The following responses show the most frequent responses:

- Challenge lies with students to find the time to do additional study (S)
- Masters needs to be based on experience not a direct step up from basic degree (S)
- Lack of concrete information on which to base detailed planning (S)
- Dealing with coaching requirement and cost of HEI services to support and accredit (S)
- Ensuring trainees have the capacity to take on additional workload (S)
- Difficultly prioritising time commitment (P)
- Varying range of provision/support for students between establishments (P)
- Who will assess the Masters level teaching? (P)

As the responses illustrate, there seems to be confusion as to who will oversee the Masters: Some respondents (10) identified it was the responsibility of the students and the majority (58) were unsure whether the universities or schools would convene the programme. As one school based mentor from the secondary sector said:

> 'The Masters is poorly planned and delivered in order to jump on the band wagon. Not enough liaison with schools and looking ahead to how this is supported going forward.'

The respondents suggested the following CPD could help:

- Any CPD which looks at the whole area of training, teaching and learning (S)
- Exemplar materials (S)
- Detailed and consistent framework from HEI partners (S)
- The universities have to do more to bring schools on board here by explaining the schemes and outreach courses (S)

- Collaborative approach needed for MTL (S)
- To put less emphasis on this because it does not necessarily improve someone's ability to teach (P)
- More information on what is required of student workload and overview of how it relates to schools (P)

3.2.1d. School Mentor support

The respondents were also asked to comment on the support for mentors in school. As the following statements show, the mentors and headteachers face challenges with this aspect of Initial Teacher Education. The majority of the respondents (72) identified this as a challenge because of the cost and impact of mentoring in the classroom and the fact that the mentoring role is not always adequately recognised by student teachers and other staff providing teacher education provision:

- Finding mentors: 'Even with remission of teaching, mentors spend far too long with trainees than there is time' (S)
- Cost implications – time needed is much more greater than money provided to schools (S)
- Problems with mentor training especially or subject knowledge and pedagogy (S)
- Time (S)
- Plenty of training mentors is important (S 14-19)
- Mentor time (S 14-19)
- One system for all universities (P)
- Ensuring class progress is not affected negatively by presence of trainees (P)
- Time commitment (P)
- The mentor role is not always appropriately recognised by students and universities (P)
- Matching expectation and understanding (P)
- Difficult to fit all students in (P)

Analysis of the responses show that this is a difficulty faced in both the Primary and Secondary sectors (32 secondary respondents and 32 primary respondents identified it as a challenge). The respondents suggested that the following CPD could help:

- Link contact between schools and universities e.g. through introductory meetings (S)
- Training of new mentors against the standards (S)
- National ITT mentoring framework with associated accreditation (S)
- Clear guidance of expectations of mentors (P)
- Accreditation for mentors (P)

The responses show that staff feel it is important to raise the profile of mentors in schools as well as strengthening communications with universities as summarised in the following quotation:

'Schools must make appropriate appointments as mentors and professional mentors so that people have a real enthusiasm and don't just push the responsibility to the bottom of the pile. Mentoring needs to be at the top of agendas like strengthening communication with HEIs'.

3.2.1e. Partnership Arrangements

The respondents identified similar challenges and issues with the partnership arrangements as they had done with the school mentor support. The majority of the responses showed that school-based mentors feel there is a lack of communication between themselves and their colleagues in universities:

- There needs to be greater understanding of situations with partner schools and willingness to cooperate (S)
- Keeping track of different expectations and procedures (P)
- Lack of consistency from institution to institution (P)
- Lack of communication and discussion with HEIs (P)

In order to overcome such challenges the respondents identified the following ideas for CPD:

- Discussions with tutors before students arrive to establish student knowledge and experience (S)
- Student teachers given specific targets when they go to placements (S)
- Professional mentor conferences (S)
- One common system across universities (S)

3.2.1f. Course content/ curriculum

The respondents identified a number of challenges regarding the curriculum and course content. As the responses show, the challenges and issues are related to the changing nature and fluidity of courses and curriculum:

- Course content is usually appropriate although collection of evidence by students can be bureaucratic and time-consuming (S)
- Changes to secondary curriculum e.g. KS3, 4 AND 5 within 3 years and change to KS3 SATS (S)
- The diplomas will have an impact on delivery of training and development (S 14-19)
- Basic English and maths to appropriate level so students can teach level 6. Although testing is in place many students lack level to extend pupils' knowledge (P)
- Students often enter school practice without having input on curriculum areas (P)

The responses show that the majority of the mentors and headteachers who completed the survey perceive that the introduction of initiatives such as the 14-19 Diploma and changes at Key Stages can have an impact on student teachers' education:

'Curriculum changes and introductions mean trainees entering department in state of flux and there are potential issues of clarity regarding subject knowledge requirements'.

In response to this they stated that the following CPD would be helpful:

- Online and paper resources (S)
- Database of 'expert' trainers for use a consultant leaders or local workshops (S)
- Liaison between HEIs and schools (P)
- Training for mentors on new developments (P)
- Initiatives to inspire trainees (P)

3.2.1g. Every Child Matters (ECM) and Multi-agency working

The participants were also asked to identify any challenges, opportunities or issues with Every Child Matters and the task of working with multiple agencies. The following issues were most frequently raised by the respondents:

- The principle is fine but time is required to meet with the multi-agencies and complete required documentation (S)
- Variability of experience for trainees within different schools e.g. some are placed in very challenging schools with lots of ECM issues, others far less so (S)
- Students do not always have the opportunities to experience work with agencies (P)
- It is difficult to ensure students are involved in this (e.g. Criminal Records Bureaus) (P)

They said they would like to see the following CPD to enable them to meet the challenges:

- Examples of good practice (S)
- Online forum for possible discussions (S)
- time to talk with multi-agencies (P)
- Discussions with HEIs about their inputs (P)

3.2.1h. Balancing the ideal against the reality of working in schools today

The respondents were also asked about challenges and opportunities regarding the balancing the ideal and the reality of working in schools.

- Ensuring balance of experience over progress (S)
- Resolving issues of reliable evidence levels vs. workloads (S)
- Some university tutors are out of touch with the realities of being in schools (S)
- Time to deliver pedagogy (S)
- Lots of admin takes up to much valuable teaching time (S 14-19)

The majority of school-based mentors (69 respondents) said that they felt the balance for students was equal as summarised by a secondary mentor; 'the balance is fairly equal, teaching is very demanding with a huge workload and student teachers have lots of to do too'.

Unlike with the other aspects of Initial Teacher Education, the majority of the school mentors and headteachers (59 respondents) identified that CPD was not what was required to help them to meet these challenges. Instead, they said they want to see a

sharing of 'good practice' and teacher educators from universities experiencing 'real-life schooling' in the schools as illustrated in the following quotations:

> 'CPD is not the issue, it's giving people involved sufficient time to do their jobs properly'.

> 'Apart from sharing good practice, professionals in schools do not take kindly to external groups giving advice on school life! Probably the same in every profession!'

> 'Get University tutors teaching in schools as part of their contracts during the course of the year'.

3.2.1i. Any other challenges

The respondents were also asked to identify any other challenges that were not represented within the survey and gave the following responses:

- The level of student teachers' literacy levels (i.e. if lower levels) has an impact on classroom delivery (S)
- Unrealistic workloads of teaching (S)
- Modularisation of degrees leading to subject knowledge gaps requiring resolution by trainees/providers (S)
- The issue of attracting suitably qualified applicants (S)
- Do mentors for the MTL need to be at Masters level? (S)
- Too many initiatives/changes without opportunity to settle into a routine (P)

3.2.1j. Longer-term needs

The final question in the survey asked school-based mentors to outline any future and longer-term needs. They gave the following responses:

- Career changes – extension and enrichment for acceleration to leadership (S)
- How does the Government make teaching a valued career which does not take over people's lives? (P)
- Training needs to be longer than a year (especially now with introduction of Masters) (P)

In this section the challenges and opportunities currently facing school-based mentors and headteachers have been identified. In the following section I will outline the findings of the focus groups held with four school-based mentors.

3.2.2 Focus group data

This section reports data collected from two focus groups with school-based mentors in a university in the North-West of England. The findings provide a qualitative overview of the challenges, issues and opportunities mentors' experience. During the focus groups the discussions included the following key areas:

- Challenges within the role;

- 'HEIs lagging behind schools';
- Assessment;
- Every Child Matters and Multi-Agency Working;
- Masters level learning and teaching;
- School base mentor support and partnership arrangements: Course Content and Curriculum.

3.2.2a Challenges within the role

In both focus groups the teachers discussed how the mentoring role is perceived within their schools and wider educational contexts. Those working within the primary sector commented that it was a valuable and recognised role amongst their colleagues in both the school and the universities. Whilst the secondary mentors also commented that the role was extremely valuable to the schools, student teachers and university, they highlighted a tension of time between this role and the other responsibilities they had within their schools. They both agreed that there is a lack of time set aside for this mentoring role and that 'ideally it should be recognised as a separate role within schools'.

All the teachers who took part in the focus group discussions said that the training programmes for mentors need to be strengthened in terms of availability and the provision of information particularly as the student population and courses increase and continue to diversify.

The mentors voiced concerns regarding changes and introductions to the National Curriculum; changes to KS3 and Early Years Foundations and the introduction of the 14-19 Diploma. One suggestion to help with this was that school-based mentors should be involved in pre-curriculum planning so that the ways in which changes to the curriculum will be implemented in the classroom can be discussed.

3.2.2b 'HEIs lagging behind schools'

The issue of HEIs lagging behind schools was raised in both focus groups. The mentors said that this was particularly when dealing with assessment and what is the reality of working in schools and classroom practice. The teachers explained that they felt lecturers in universities were not always up-to-date with practice. This was evident in the standard assessment forms and the demands being made of student teachers. The teachers commented that they would like more discussions and input into the assessment criteria of students' learning and the methods of recording their progress.

3.2.2c Assessment

All the teacher mentors described a process of assessment which involved observations of, and discussions with trainee teachers. The subject mentors also played an important role in this aspect of students' learning. The secondary school mentors commented that they were very reliant on conscientious and very dedicated subject mentors.

The primary school-based mentors raised the point that their assessment of students' learning was constrained and their feedback limited because they have to tick boxes rather than writing their thoughts:

'it would be more beneficial for us and our students if we could write comments specific to them…let us out of our box, let us use our professionalism. Also talk to us as teachers about what kind of form is appropriate.'

Both the primary and secondary mentors also raised the issue of the subjective nature of assessment when determining the levels students were working at. Their discussions revealed that within both the primary and secondary sector there is a lack of consistency when mentors determine the level of students' progress as assessment varies between mentors, schools and universities. The secondary mentors suggested more guidance from universities and collaboration with them and schools would be valuable.

3.2.2d Every Child Matters (ECM) and Multi-Agency working

The discussions of ECM varied depending on whether the mentors were based in primary or secondary schools. The mentors involved in secondary ITE said that although they were aware of ECM and whose responsibility it is within their schools, they themselves have not had any training related to this. They agreed that more training in ECM and multi-agency working would be beneficial. For the primary mentors however, ECM was central to their school initiatives, agendas, policies, planning and classroom teaching as illustrated in the following quotation:

'ECM is fundamental and at the centre of all our work, planning and the subject we teach, and how [pupils] eat their lunch are all connected to it. It encompasses the whole school.'

The school-based mentors also pointed out that the training for dealing with parents and other non-curricular aspects of the ITE programmes should also be the focus of discussions between schools and HEIs. The primary mentors agreed that students should be given more guidance on talking to parents and colleagues from other institutions such as Social Workers. Illustrating the point that universities are sometimes 'lagging' behind schools, these mentors suggested that they needed continuing professional development alongside lecturers to be able to help students to develop such skills.

3.2.2e Masters level learning and teaching

Discussions relating to the introduction of the Masters in Teaching and Learning to ensure teaching become a Masters level profession also highlight the importance of up-to-date training and collaboration between schools and universities offering ITE. Whilst positive about the possibilities of teaching becoming a Master's level profession, the mentors voiced their concerns about the practical implementation of the course. The mentors from the secondary schools questioned the ways their student teachers perceive it and concluded:

'Students see it as an add-on and do not give it very much priority in workload. They say "I'm not bothered with this Masters, I'm just going to do enough to make sure I get the right mark". Instead of inspiring, or uplifting them and giving them opportunity, it's just become an awful burden.'

The primary mentors questioned the use of the course within classrooms and suggested it is 'about a qualification rather than practice'. The secondary mentors

had a similar discussion and were 'not sure of the benefits because we've not seen any opportunities for research like we were told would be possible'. The mentors also found it difficult at times to fully support their students studying at this level because they did not share the same level of educational theory. As a result of this students' studying at the Masters level presented additional demands for the mentors because as one primary teacher described in the following quotation:

> 'it can make us feel academically unconfident and this doesn't help our students. Not knowing as much background as they do is also frustrating because it means we cannot always help students enough with linking practice with theory.'

The primary school mentors pointed out that feeling 'academically unconfident' was exacerbated by the fact that those students studying at master's level seemed to be different; 'they're different, they have to work harder and ask different demands in addition to normal things…only the dedicated ones stay'.

The mentors' experiences so far of working with student teachers at Masters level suggest that there is a need for them to attend more training courses about mentoring master's level students and receive professional development in this area of teacher education. They suggested in depth discussions with and between schools and HEIs, for example on reflective practice, would be very useful.

3.2.2f School based mentor support and partnership arrangements: Course Content and Curriculum

Throughout the focus group discussions the mentors highlighted that training is important and is needed to ensure the school-based mentor role is fulfilled to the best of their abilities. In the discussion with the secondary mentors however, one of them raised the issue of the difficultly of being released from school to attend courses and training events:

> '[they] will not allow staff to go out for training sessions, to be guinea pigs. He says wait until the Government have said you've got to do this and then they can go out…this is because a teacher's main job is to teach students and they want them to go on courses and bring something back that can benefit the school rather than wasting time…there are kids in classes that have to be taught.'

Once again, the primary and secondary school-based mentors also stated that they felt it was important for them to be consulted during the planning stages of courses; 'courses need to be designed by us if they're meant for us, we know what we need'.

The training provision offered by the TDA needs to be useful and fit in with the long term aims of schools. It is also important to ensure courses are advertised in advance because time is needed to plan and make arrangements for supply cover.

3.2.3 Conclusions

The findings of the survey and focus groups that were completed by school-based mentors and headteachers show that there is a need for continuing professional development. As was the case with the tutors in universities, those based in schools and education centres highlighted the need for stronger communication and collaboration links between universities and schools. The findings illustrate that it is important for tutors in universities and mentors in schools to share 'good practice' and learn what is happening in their partner institutions to be able to expand their knowledge of each others' practices. In particular, the mentors noted that they would like more discussions and guidance on the Masters in Teaching and Learning to develop their knowledge and understanding of the degree and their role. The strengthening of communication also needs to include other schools to overcome issues such as the subjectivity of assessment. Whilst discussing assessment, the school based mentors would also like more autonomy when assessing students. Rather than being a CPD issue, teachers suggested they would be able to overcome the subjectivity of assessment through guidelines and being allowed to use their own initiatives when giving students feedback.

The mentors also demonstrated how important it is for them to be involved in the pre-planning stages of curriculum and course development to discuss how changes or new initiatives university and country-wide will be implemented in classroom practice.

Analysis of the mentors' responses and discussions also highlight the need for training and support programmes for mentors. The findings illustrate how important the mentoring role is within initial teacher education and the mentors themselves feel this can be enhanced with more training and support. This is particularly important within the current context of the increasingly changing nature of the curriculum and the introduction of courses such as the 14-19 Diplomas.

Whilst training and support programmes were considered valuable by mentors, they identified that it was difficult to attend them because previously some have been outstanding and others have been dismal. The mentors suggested that they should also be asked about what courses they want to attend.

4. Recommendations: Is it a question of Continuing Professional Development or Community Development?

The findings of this research raise the question whether teacher educators working in universities and school-based mentors need more CPD or rather instead, they need the opportunity to develop a shared community of practice between the institutions.

For the Training Development Agency for Schools (TDA):

- Both the survey respondents and focus group participants placed high value on the informal discussions for professional development.

- Encourage schools and universities to establish and build on communication links.

- Findings suggest that it would be useful to provide funding for tutors in universities and mentors in schools to help them develop communications and collaborative links; and to buy valuable time and opportunity for them to discus 'good practice'.

- Tailor CPD (e.g. workshops, courses and seminars) to the specifics of schools and universities rather than general overviews.

- Given responses to MTL, provide more information, vision and guidance about the Masters degrees.

- Findings show that teacher educators in universities and school-based mentors need to have greater autonomy over their choice of, and access to CPD.

- Whilst mentors who participated in the focus groups manage the school mentor role, the role should be considered as an individual professional one in schools. In addition to this, more should be done to increase recognition of the work of mentors.

- Training and support for mentors in schools needs to be strengthened. The findings show that this is particularly necessary within an educational context where the curriculum is in a state of flux.

- It is a concern to note that some of the respondents and participants did not have the training to deal with Every Child Matters and therefore this should be a priority issue.

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