

## **Teaching: a Masters profession? The continuing conversation**

**With thanks to the delegates at the TEAN workshop February 23<sup>rd</sup> 2010 whose inspirations, questions and thought-provoking insights keep the conversation about Masters going.**

Overall the day offered an opportunity to reflect with other practitioners who are also coming to terms with the tensions/dialogues in this move forward for the profession.

### **What is Masters all about?**

Jayne Woodbury from the University of the West of England started the day by reminding us of the background to Teaching, a Masters profession. Her PowerPoint presentation is available in the Masters folder of the Teacher Educators' Storehouse: Teaching, a Masters level profession: developing inspiring teachers or accountable managers?

The ensuing discussion raises the following intriguing statements and questions from delegates for you to ponder:

- Teaching requires resilience and an ebb and flow between reflection and pragmatism – where does Masters lie within this ebb and flow?
- If you are an accountable teacher, can you be inspiring as well?
- What has Masters to do with management? Does it have *anything* to do with management?
- What has Masters to do with managerialism and performativity? Does it have *anything* to do with managerialism and performativity?
- Does Masters produce better teachers? What do we mean by better teachers?
- Is Masters the precursor to PhD? Are we dealing with a new concept of Mastersness?
- Trust is the key to Masters – where is it? Does it exist?
- What is Masters? Is it something inspirational for the teaching profession or just another qualification?
- Positive thinking suggests that Masters is a 'disposition' a kind of 'standing up tall', something beneficial to the individual and to the profession.

### **MTL (Masters in Teaching and Learning)**

Carolyn Bromfield from the University of the West of England gave an inspiring presentation of MTL as it is being approached by the TRANSFORM consortium for Newly Qualified Teachers in secondary National Challenge Schools. Active members of the TRANSFORM consortium are: the University of Gloucestershire, the University College of St Mark and St John, the University of Plymouth and the University of the West of England. Carolyn's PowerPoint presentation is available in the Masters folder of the Teacher Educators' Storehouse: Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL).

Delegates discussed two questions as set out below and came up with questions of their own:

### **1. How could current M level provision work with MTL development?**

- Will incentives for MTL lead to the diminishing of MA (Ed)?
- What about funding? Funding is already an issue in Wales (GTCW).
- Where will the educational researchers of the future come from?
- Will MTL further embed research into practice?
- How can we find time for coach/participant meetings (MTL) versus twilight and weekend time (MA)?
- What will be the issue/effect of inspiring M level by the end of 5<sup>th</sup> year of teaching? What happens if you haven't got it?
- What will you do after your first 5 years? What will be the structure to CPD (Continuing Professional Development)? How do BA (Eds) 'compete' or 'fit' into this programme funding?
- Should the question be rephrased in reverse? How could MTL development work with current M level provision?
- PGCE tutors need to be educated in the MTL phase 1. How will this happen?
- How traditional Masters work with MTL will depend on how the funding is arranged in the future. How will this happen?

### **2. How can teachers work in partnership with schools to embed Masters?**

- How do university CPD staff/departments work with initial teacher educators? Small-scale TDA-funded CPD projects can easily be developed through the day to day contacts between initial teacher educator tutors and the schools they visit. Will MTL divert the funding for such projects? If yes, structural links i.e. formally constituted connections are likely to replace the informal 'growth points' that currently occur – schools, school networks, University CPD staff, Local Authorities. There are fairly low completion rates from these local projects – often linked to school priorities.
- Through existing partnership channels (established through PGCE?)
- Consortium approach, elearning/conferencing.
- There are questions about workload in school.
- Is MTL Mickey Mouse? The driver is not pedagogic it's economic.
- How can it succeed? By us being flexible – improvisational - we can do lots.

### **Masters in practice**

Mike Murphy, Jo Lock and Phil Norman from the University of Plymouth shared their experiences with delegates. Phil suggested some of the issues in M level work:

- Educational knowledge – reading, engaging with, theming, and critically explicating the understandings of the issue in hand.
- Successes or otherwise – separating the 'me' as critic from the 'me' as actor – then referencing different critical perspectives.
- Developing openness to re-evaluating situations/moments/events in the light of what others say.
- Honest reflection – on self, classes, individuals, schools. Developing one's own story – referencing one's own intuitive insights – seeing one's own partiality – relating to a framework of thinking.
- Reflecting regularly on feeling/becoming/doing teaching.

- Becoming receptive to multiple interpretations of issues/situations.

Mike suggested that activities given to M level students should induce curiosity; the traditional assignment at Plymouth is based on a range of activities. He also posed some challenging questions:

- Is M level a poison chalice or a crock of gold?
- Should M be based on chaos?
- Is Masters multi-layering?
- Is it engagement with literature?

Finally Bob Burstow shared practice from King's College and suggests this conclusion for the community:

MTL and MA: The urgent desire to not dumb down the MTL (and Masters) as a result of government; that is a priority for all of us.

Please contact [tean@cumbria.ac.uk](mailto:tean@cumbria.ac.uk) if you would like to add your voice to the continuing conversation about Masters.