University of Glasgow

Teachers as Learners: career-long professional learning
Peer-mentoring as professional learning to improve pupil learning

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Presentation

- Context of Educational Reform in Scotland –
  frame to consider new teacher education approaches to improve pupil learning

- Career-long professional learning

- Principles of Learning in 21st century

- Peer- mentoring research and development

Curriculum for Excellence

- Major curriculum reform for all teachers

- 3 – 18 years curriculum

- Outcomes-focused

successful learners

with

> enthusiasm and motivation for learning
> determination to reach high standards of achievement
> openness to new thinking and ideas

and able to

> use literacy, communication and numeracy skills
> use technology for learning
> think creatively and independently
> learn independently and as part of a group
> make reasoned evaluations
> link and apply different kinds of learning in new situations

confident individuals

with

> self respect
> a sense of physical, mental and emotional wellbeing
> secure values and beliefs
> ambition

and able to

> relate to others and manage themselves
> pursue a healthy and active lifestyle
> be self aware
> develop and communicate their own beliefs and view of the world
> live as independently as they can
> assess risk and take informed decisions
> achieve success in different areas of activity

To enable all young people to become

responsible citizens

with

> respect for others
> commitment to participate responsibly in political, economic, social and cultural life

and able to

> develop knowledge and understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it
> understand different beliefs and cultures
> make informed choices and decisions
> evaluate environmental, scientific and technological issues
> develop informed, ethical views of complex issues

effective contributors

with

> an enterprising attitude
> resilience
> self-reliance

and able to

> communicate in different ways and in different settings
> work in partnership and in teams
> take the initiative and lead
> apply critical thinking in new contexts
> create and develop
> solve problems

Curriculum for Excellence

- Curriculum framework is not prescriptive - teachers able to make decisions about the most effective learning and teaching approaches to achieve improved outcomes for children and young people

- Emphasis on children and young people's active engagement in their own learning

Curriculum for Excellence

- All teachers have to understand new content and assessment processes and new learning and teaching approaches.

For example:

- All teachers responsible for literacy, numeracy and health and well-being

- All teachers encouraged to engage in collaborative teaching linking subject areas around learning themes to develop higher order skills and achieve broader outcomes.

Curriculum for Excellence

- The curriculum documents leading up to implementation of Curriculum for Excellence all signalled the desire for an ongoing collaborative approach to curriculum reform.

- They set out a vision to encourage teachers to act as **active agents** in curriculum review and development to improve pupil learning.

- 'This review of the curriculum is a continuous process of professional learning and development, not a one-off change...

- … It aims to engage teachers in thinking from first principles about their educational aims and values and their classroom practice. The process is based upon evidence of how change can be brought about successfully – through a climate in which reflective practitioners share and develop ideas.'

  (Scottish Government, 2006:4).

Feedback on Curriculum Development

- University of Glasgow (2009)
- Collect, analyse and report on the feedback from the draft curriculum
- In the main teachers were positive about the opportunities to take decisions about learning and teaching approaches

- Different levels of confidence about the readiness to implement the new curriculum
- Continuum of different needs for professional development

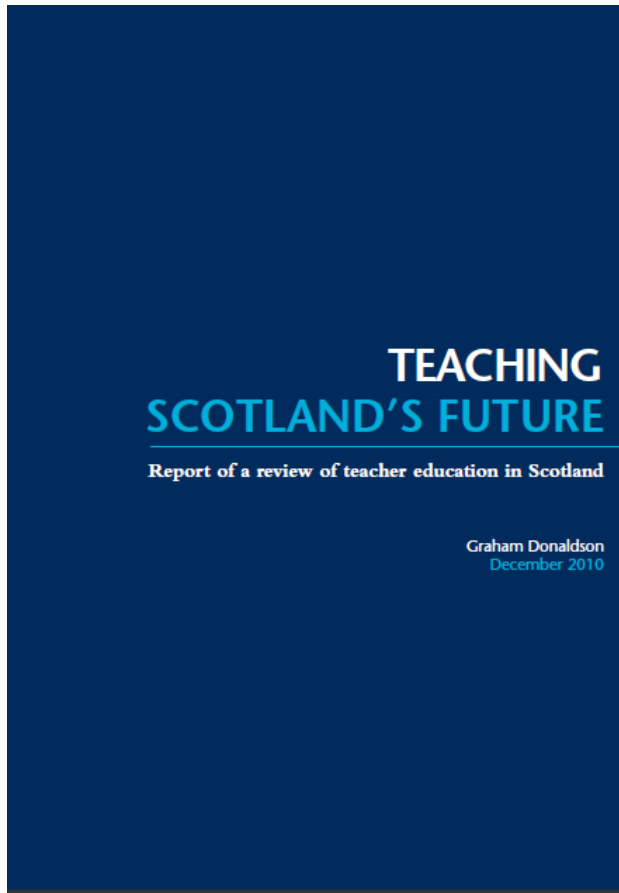## Need for differentiated professional learning

← CONTINUUM OF NEEDS →

- Welcome creativity
- Willing and able to design curricula
- At ease with facilitating learners and learning
- Ready and able to adapt to change

- Afraid of change
- Need clear curriculum structure to follow
- Bound by assessments
- Uncomfortable about feeling of loss of control to learners

Differentiated professional learning

Understanding and supporting teachers as individual learners

- Differences in prior knowledge, in values and beliefs about learning and teaching means that teachers have different professional learning needs.

- Uncovering what each teacher brings to their professional learning and what challenges they have in implementing new content or learning and teaching approaches is necessary in order to be able to facilitate them in developing their learning according to their own and their pupils' needs (Livingston, 2012).

Review of Teacher Education

TEACHING SCOTLAND'S FUTURE

Report of a review of teacher education in Scotland

Graham Donaldson
December 2010

- Teaching Scotland's Future (Donaldson, 2011)
- Wide ranging review of teacher education including the initial phase, CPD and leadership
- 50 recommendations for change to teacher education

Teachers as Learners

- … tailored CPD which meets individual needs in-house, is peer-led and sustained through professional dialogue, with some specialist input to provide an external perspective where appropriate, seems an effective and efficient way to continue to support teachers, particularly when they are engaged in the implementation of major changes in education.

(Donaldson, 2011:69)

Principles of learning in the 21st century

Current understanding of learning can be characterised in the following way:

- 'constructive as learners actively construct their knowledge and skills,

- 'self-regulated with people actively using strategies to learn',

- 'situated' and best understood in context rather than abstract

- and 'collaborative' not a solo activity (De Corte, 2010, p35).

- What is known about how people learn should not only be applied to pupil learning it should also be applied more regularly to teachers' learning.

  (Livingston, 2012)

Much of what constitutes the typical approach to formal teacher professional development is antithetical to what promotes teacher learning.

(Bransford et al, 2000:17)

Teachers' professional learning experiences are out of step with developments in classroom pedagogy.

Teachers as Active Learners

- Teachers' and school leaders' understanding of professional development needs to extend beyond courses, seminars, workshops and events that are planned *for* and delivered *to* teachers.

- A shift in thinking is needed so teachers' professional development is recognised as enabling teachers to come to new understandings about learning and teaching for themselves.

- **Where they take responsibility for their own learning.**

Teachers as Learners

- The classroom offers potential as a laboratory for teachers to engage in relevant practitioner enquiry into learning and is more likely to develop their sense of ownership of professional learning and relevancy to the pupils they work with.

- To be effective this learning needs to be facilitated and supported.

  (Livingston, 2012).

Collaborative Enquiry Approach to Learning

Active participation in practitioner inquiry into learning and teaching through interaction and dialogue with others.

Focused and structured learning conversations with peer-mentors.

Mentoring approaches

+ The aim is that mentoring should focus on supporting teachers to come to their own understanding of the ways in which their teaching can impact on their pupils' learning.

- The challenge is that currently mentoring is not consistent and is not always founded on a depth of understanding of what mentoring means or its potential to impact to learning and teaching

Systematic peer-mentoring

- Partnership with the New Teacher Center in Santa Cruz, USA in 2005

- Developed mentor training with local authorities in 2006

- First pilot study in 2006 – 2008

- Second pilot study in 2008 - 2009

- Research and development project in 2010 – 2011 with a selection of local authorities in Scotland.

- Aim - to evaluate the introduction of mentoring processes to support professional dialogue between teachers and the impact of mentoring on the quality of learning and teaching within the context of the new curriculum in Scotland.

Pilot Project

- 58 mentors
- Teachers who were their mentees
- Head teachers of the mentees
- Local authority education officers

- 3 training days (single days over a 6 months period with mentor forums between training days)
- Overarching message was that the starting point for the mentoring processes was the analysis of student learning.

Learning conversations

- Structured discussion to provide focus and clarity on improving learning and teaching

- Ongoing development through analysis of evidence to identify needs

- Collaborative discussion of possible solutions, actions, next steps in learning and teaching

- Collaborative recording of discussion

Pilot Project

- After each training day the participants were encouraged to apply their learning in practice with specific tasks set to practise the mentoring processes with their peers in schools, reflect on them and record them for discussion at the start of the following training day.

- This approach aimed to enable them to build on their prior learning, make the learning and practice relevant to their own individual contexts and enabled the next steps in learning (next training day) to be tailored to their own learning needs.

Pilot Project Training Days

Modelling the mentoring processes they were being trained in and focusing their learning on active co-construction and collaborative enquiry approaches.

First steps in systematic peer mentoring

- Developing a culture of teachers working together in enquiry, reflection, evaluation and improvement needs to be nurtured and supported by building trusting relationships between peers, who feel able to share opportunities and challenges in learning and teaching. (Livingston, 2012)

- 'critical constructivist approach' – developing a way of being as teachers - working together, posing problems of learning and teaching, uncovering assumptions, creating new knowledge and reconstructing practice.

Findings - mentors

- The mentors indicated that, the systematic mentoring approach enabled them to offer specific support that was more closely aligned with the individual needs of the teachers and their pupils.

- They said this was achieved because the learning conversations were carefully structured and began with the analysis of the needs of the teachers and their pupils.

Findings –mentors and mentees

- The mentoring processes enabled the mentors and the teachers (mentees) to discuss and engage in deep reflection on learning and teaching within Curriculum for Excellence and learn from each other.

- The mentors and mentees indicated that as a result of participating in mentoring processes they had gained a greater understanding of the new curriculum and their own teaching practice had benefited from developing new ideas and approaches with colleagues.

Findings: benefits for mentors

- Development of leadership skills
- More collegiate and more open to other/new ways of doing things
- Improved listening and communication skills
- Opportunities to learn from different contexts
- Increased understanding of the importance of differentiation in teacher learning

Findings: Challenges

- In their desire to be the best mentor they could be some began by providing resources for their new teachers and offering solutions.

- The training helped them to realise that this approach would not help the teacher to become more autonomous or support them in solving problems for themselves.

Challenges: Differentiating mentoring processes

Further training to develop mentor's ability to select appropriate mentoring approach and move between different approaches according to individual teacher learning and teaching needs

- Instruction
- Facilitation
- Collaboration

- Importance of trust and mentor language

Key learning message from the project

- The struggle for sense-making of the pupils' work, challenges the mentor and the mentee's thinking and puts the focus firmly on searching for understanding of the learning and teaching processes in relation to the teacher's own pupils, class and school.

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