Chapter 2 The Scottish approach to mentoring in early phase teacher education: an overview and critique

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At the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- understand the rationale for mentoring within Scotland
- understand the mentoring approach within the wider policy context which has conceived of learning to teach as an intellectually-engaged and socially-practiced activity
- critically reflect on the teacher induction scheme and the role of mentoring in achieving its aims
- critically reflect on the 'Scottish approach' to early phase mentoring in relation to literature and practice in other countries, identifying strengths and possible areas for development

Introduction

This chapter explores the rationale for mentoring in Scotland, tracing its development in early phase teacher education (initial teacher education and the induction year). The chapter aims to show how these Scottish developments can be understood in relation to the wider discourse on 'learning to teach' both within and beyond Scotland. This is done through an analysis of the development of the world-renowned 'teacher induction scheme' (TIS) as well as through discussion of contemporary research findings on mentors' and new teachers' views of their mentoring experiences from the 'Measuring Quality in Initial Teacher Education' (MQuITE) project. The chapter concludes by raising a number of challenges, and making some suggestions about how Scotland might move to the next stage of its development regarding early phase mentoring. It is hoped that this chapter will help all of those involved in mentoring processes in Scotland to better understand why things are the way they are, and to be able to take a proactively critical stance on their future engagement in mentoring and towards their contribution to wider mentoring policy going forward.

Task 2.1: WHAT DO YOU ALREADY KNOW ABOUT EARLY PHASE MENTORING IN SCOTLAND?

- Before engaging with this chapter, think about what you already know about early phase mentoring in Scotland, drawing on your experiences of both mentoring others and being mentored yourself (if relevant).
- What do you think works well, and what do you think are the challenges?

Conceptualising mentoring in initial teacher education in Scotland

Mentoring has been an enduring feature of early phase teacher education, particularly in relation to the school-based element of initial teacher education (ITE). While this might seem like an obvious statement to make, it is not necessarily the case globally, where the school-based component of ITE varies considerably (see, for example, European Commission, 2015);it is worth stepping back and looking more analytically at how learning

to teach is conceptualised in Scotland vis-à-vis how it might be conceptualised in other places. This analysis helps to reveal how mentoring is positioned in the Scottish context.

Initial teacher education (ITE) in Scotland has long been higher education-led, initially in colleges of education, and then becoming entirely university-based in the 1990s, as former colleges of education merged with local universities (Hulme & Kennedy, 2016). While led by the university, it has always comprised both university study and practical experience in schools, with 'placement' being a requirement of all programmes in order to satisfy the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) accreditation process (GTCS, 2019), and subsequently entitle graduates to become provisionally registered as teachers.

However, while the inclusion of placement in ITE is accepted as 'common sense' in Scotland, it is calibrated in terms of time, i.e. days/weeks, rather than in terms of quality, or with any clearly defined articulation of its purpose within a wider pedagogical framework. Thus, when we talk of 'placement' we may well be talking about a range of very different experiences, varying from programme to programme and school to school. Related to this, MacDonald & Rae (2018) note the influence of the 'practical turn' in teacher education: 'a move toward models which elevate 'practical' knowledge over theoretical or pedagogical knowledge' (p. 837). This policy movement is a global phenomenon, with, amongst others, Zeichner (2012) warning of the dangers in the US context, Reid (2011) considering the issue from an Australian perspective and Mattsson, Eilertsen & Rorrison (2012) editing a collection which analyses the 'practicum turn' largely from a Nordic perspective. It is important to stress that the 'practical turn' still very much includes a role for the school-based teacher mentor, but one that implies a pedagogical stance that emphasises copying effective practices for immediate impact, rather than developing deeper understanding that might be applied in a range of different contexts. Not only does the practical turn have implications for what is expected of mentors, but it also reveals a particular view of the purpose of ITE itself. Zeichner (2012) illustrates a key motivation for the practical turn being: 'a strong press for reducing the length of teacher education programs and for eliminating anything that is not seen as immediately useful to new teachers' (p. 379).

Scottish ITE programmes have long been delivered 'in partnership' with schools, but the extent and formality of these partnerships has been questioned. Brisard et al (2006) pointed to the 'goodwill' nature of teacher involvement in supporting students on placements, arguing that at that point, teachers had resisted any formalisation of the role. A particular sticking point was around teacher mentors' roles in assessment, and while many more ITE programmes now adopt a shared approach to assessment, this is still generally very much led by HE colleagues. Brisard et al (*ibid*.) outline a long history of attempts to enhance university/school partnerships in ITE, but it was not until the publication of *Teaching Scotland's Future* (Donaldson, 2011) that formal partnership agreements were drawn up. Almost ten years after these partnership agreements were drawn up, practices remain variable, probably still reflecting, although maybe to a lesser extent, what Brisard *et al*. described as 'instrumental partnerships' (p. 62) which are 'mostly geared towards the ITE needs for the HEI institution' (*ibid*.).

Underpinning these challenges is the debate on teacher education pedagogy more generally. While the university-led model of ITE in Scotland demonstrates a valuing of both

theory and practice, the ways in which these two things come together is more contentious. Lillejord & Børte (2016) articulate this in terms of either the traditional model 'where students are *first* presented [with] the theory they *later* are expected to 'practice' (p. 557) vis-à-vis a model whereby 'students simultaneously investigate instructional practice through first hand experiences *and* consult the research knowledge' (*ibid*.). These two contrasting approaches reveal different conceptions of the process of learning to teach which inevitably, but sometimes implicitly, imply different roles and expectations of teacher mentors. In the first model the mentor's role is simply to ensure that the 'practice' is enacted in the school, whereas in the second model, the mentor's role is to actively support the student teacher's learning through enquiry, engaging in dialogic and collaborative meaning-making.

Task 2.2: REFLECTING ON THE PURPOSE OF INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

- Given the above discussion, think about what you perceive to be the purpose of the school-based element of ITE
- Now consider what that might mean in terms of the role you might play as an ITE student mentor – what activities/tasks will be important, and what tasks or activities might actually serve to limit the student's learning?

The important thing to take away from all of this is the underpinning philosophy which drives teacher education in Scotland, which despite changes in structural and organisational approaches over time, has always valued the complimentary contributions of both schools and universities. Menter (2017) in his literature review on 'the role and contribution of higher education in contemporary teacher education' concludes by stating that the evidence he presents':

'is not a call for the maintenance of the status quo, but rather a recognition that through the involvement of the universities as a fundamental element of provision, we may continue to see innovation and improvement that will ensure that the teaching profession itself continues to be held in high esteem and that the continuing challenges of overcoming educational disadvantage are directly tackled by teachers and teacher educators who understand these challenges and are equipped with the skills to address them.' (p. 15)

So, while mentoring is part of an enduring philosophy in ITE, mentoring during induction, on the other hand, is shaped by a prescribed national policy: the Teacher Induction Scheme, established in 2002 and managed by the General teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS).

The introduction of the Teacher Induction Scheme (2002)
Following years of a very loosely supported system of the GTCS requiring two years of 'probationary' service for new teachers, the early 2000s saw views galvanising around the need to introduce a more structured system of induction for new teachers in Scotland with the McCrone review of teachers' conditions of service acknowledging that 'No amount of pre-service training can fully prepare newly qualified entrants for the challenges they will face when they become teachers.' (SEED, 2000, p.7). The report went on to describe the

situation of many new teachers at that time as being one with little support, in a series of short-term temporary positions; conditions in which many new teachers took a long time to 'clock up' days of service that entitled them to full GTCS registrationThe final agreement that resulted from the McCrone report declared that 'All probationers should be guaranteed a one-year training contract with a maximum class commitment of 0.7 FTE, the remaining time available for professional development. Probation will be limited to one year and permanent employment restricted to fully registered teachers.' (SEED, 2001, p. 16), with new arrangements to be in place for the academic session starting August 2002. The process that resulted from this recommendation became known as the 'Teacher Induction Scheme' (TIS).

TIS became a process (rather than an experience), albeit one informed, certainly in the early stages, by research on mentoring. Conceptually, however, the resistance to using the term mentor – justified in part because of previous challenging experiences in the nineties with a 'Mentor Teacher Initiative' pilot, instigated by the then Scottish Office Education Department and run by Moray House (Smith et al., 2006) – is possibly a missed trick. Instead of adopting the term and wrestling properly with the conceptualisation of the 'mentor', TIS used the term 'supporter'. The choice of the word 'supporter' arguably implies a unidirectional process of support, rather than opening up possibilities of a mentoring relationship which can be two-way, or indeed collaborative, serving as what Chambers et al., (2012) call a 'profession-building endeavor' (p. 346). The positioning of the 'mentor' role within TIS is key to understanding its possibilities and limitations. We know that new teachers need some support in transitioning to the responsibilities of being the class teacher, but it is also posited that the new teachers contribute something to the school community (Helleve & Ulvik, 2011), and it is therefore argued that the mentoring role is not simply one of giving direction to the novice, but that a mentoring relationship can serve as a mutually generative source of professional learning both within teaching (Holland, 2018) and more widely (Eby et al., 2006; LaFleur, 2010).

The OECD (2019) acknowledges that mentoring can support quality induction, but goes on to warn that 'evidence on effective mentoring, and how to build the capacity of experienced teachers to become mentors is not yet robust enough' (p. 12).There seems to be no argument in the literature, or indeed in practice, against the importance of 'effective' induction programmes, but what Moir & Gless (2001) encourage us to ask is 'induction into what, and for what purpose?' (pp. 110), acknowledging that 'induction will happen, with or without a programme' (ibid.).

One aspect of induction programmes that seems to have become a *sine qua non* across the globe, is the perceived need to frame the programme around a professional standard, and in this regard, Scotland is no different, with the establishment of the first 'Standard for Full Registration' in 2001, against which new teachers were assessed during their induction year. However, in their year-long ethnographic research with a sample of new teachers in Scotland, McNally et al. 2008 found 'a discourse for new teachers' experience that is largely at odds with the standard as written' (p. 288), drawing a contrast between new teachers' experiences and the things that they deemed to be important, and the technical-rational nature of a professional standard which arose principally from a policy response to an increasingly neoliberal predilection with standardisation, homogeneity and public auditing..

The drive to shape induction programmes round professional standards is central to the messages emanating from the European Commission, who conclude that: 'Professional competence frameworks can be used to raise quality standards, by defining the knowledge, skills and attitudes that teachers… should possess or acquire. Similarly, the teacher educators who prepare teachers to undertake their tasks can benefit from frameworks of this kind.' (EU, 2014, p. 22). Indeed, teacher educators and mentors in some countries are required to meet specific professional standards related to this role. For example, with the expansion of school-based 'initial teacher training' in England, the Teaching Schools Council was invited to develop 'a set of non-statutory standards to be developed to help bring greater coherence and consistency to the school-based mentoring arrangements for trainee teachers' (p. 2016, p. 3). These standards reveal much more of a job description than a pedagogical orientation, and perhaps beg compliance rather than adaptation to context.We can see from research internationally that there is often a tendency to use professional standards as a checklist, encouraging a compliance mentality which, as McNally et al. (2008) argue, may well be counter-intuitive to the professional learning experiences of new teachers. However, McNally et al. (ibid) do suggest that there might be more productive ways to work with standards, something echoed by Bourke et al. (2018) in the US context, where 'counter discourses of resistance and reinterpretations of standards as deficit are also evident as some strive to maintain their professional autonomy' (p. 90). Thus, we see that it is possible for teacher educators (including mentors) to use standards as both administrative tools for quality assurance and accountability, as well as for more creative developmental purposes. That said, the issue at point here is not so much about the possibilities regarding how standards *could* be used, but the discourses and practices that shape how they generally *are* used.

Task 2.3: STANDARDISING MENTORING?

- What do you think might be the pros and cons of introducing a set of standards specifically for teacher mentors?
- How useful do you find the Standards for Provisional and Full Registration in supporting student and probationer teachers?

While it is perhaps fair to say that the main motivation for the development of TIS in Scotland was one of quality, and there is plenty of evidence to support that as a sensible direction of travel (e.g. Moir & Gless, 2001; Stanulis & Floden, 2009), it was also expected to support teacher retention. There is clear, although not entirely uncontested (Glazerman et al., 2010), international evidence that structured induction support does indeed support teacher retention (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). However, this evidence tends to look at the impact of induction systems as a whole rather than the impact of mentors within these programmes in particular, something that Haynes (2019) focused on in her EdD study. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Haynes concluded that in order to enhance retention, mentors required appropriate training, clear guidance about their role, time for the role and the space to foster trusting relationships with their mentee(s). The message here is that well-structured and smoothly administered induction programmes will only support retention if the mentoring is right. The mentoring role is absolutely fundamental to any induction programme.

Mentoring in Scotland: contemporary perspectives

Mentoring is clearly a central and well-established part of early phase teacher education in Scotland, and has been for a long time. However, the above discussion suggests that the role is not particularly well conceptualised; recent findings from the 'Measuring Quality in Initial Teacher Education' (MQuITE) (see www.mquite.scot) project helps to unpack the various understandings of the role across key stakeholders.

In May/June 2018, the MQuITE project team issued surveys to three stakeholder groups, asking them about their perceptions of ITE quality: students graduating from ITE programmes; staff working on ITE programmes in universities; and teachers involved in supporting ITE students in schools. The surveys attracted the following responses:

Survey	Number of responses
Graduating students	323
University staff contributing to ITE programmes	150
Teachers involved in supporting student teachers on placement	229

Table 1: Numbers of survey responses, MQuITE 2018

The survey asked the school-based mentors about their views on placement, and a common theme to emerge was a sense in which the school mentor's job was principally about assessment (as opposed to supporting professional learning). The issue of assessing students on placements was seen to be a challenging one, but while 76.9% of mentor respondents reported feeling confident, or very confident in assessing students against the Standard for Provisional Registration, only 67.3% reported actually being involved, or very involved in this process – so nearly 10% of respondents felt confident about assessing students despite not actually being involved in doing it in practice, thereby raising questions about what the sense of confidence might be based on. The qualitative data revealed a perception that assessment decisions were ultimately in the gift fo the university tutor rather than the mentor, with respondents strong views about what they perceived to be contradictory assessment decisions: *'[universities have] a desire to pass students who are struggling'*, and a perception that the teacher's/school's view is given less weight: *'the universities often overrule the schools'*. These findings support the argument made earlier that the mentor's role is perhaps not sufficiently well defined either in terms of what it entails in practice, or in its relationship to the university tutor's role.

A clear theme emerging from the MQuITE data is that mentors lack consistent information about, and access to appropriate education/training for, the role, with one respondent naming the 'elephant in the room': *'there appears to be no quality control of the teachers with whom the students are placed'*. When asked if they had undertaken any professional learning relating to mentoring students, 50% of respondents said they had. However, of this 50%, many had only engaged in very brief, instrumental 'training' type activities such as a one-hour briefing session after school. This illustrates a lack of systemic attention to the role of the mentor, assuming that if one is a good teacher, then one will also be a good mentor. Smith & Avetisian, (2011) provide a challenge to this assumption, reporting that in their

case-study of a student teacher being mentored by two different 'cooperating teachers', the cooperating teacher's approach to mentoring had a greater influence than his or her own teaching style on a teacher candidate's pedagogy, i.e. that the biggest influence on the student teacher is the mentor's capacity to mentor rather than the mentor's own teaching style. Smith & Avetisian (*ibid*.) go on to argue that at the root of this is a lack of attention to the purpose of student teaching, that is, when mentors do undertake professional learning for that role, it is more likely to focus on 'skills and responsibilities associated with the role' (p. 349) than on exploring and sharing understandings of the purpose of the placement element of ITE or induction. They go on to argue that 'In the absence of shared understandings about the purpose of student teaching, [mentor teachers], understandably, develop approaches to mentoring that stem from their own experience and beliefs about student teaching' (Smith & Avetisian, p. 350). This is of particular relevance in the Scottish context where over 90% of the 229 school mentor responses in the MQuITE survey had completed their own ITE in Scotland, revealing a fairly homogenous experience of learning to teach upon which to draw as a mentor. This is important given the relative lack of systematic professional learning available to mentors of early phase teachers, despite the Donaldson Report (2011) recommending that 'All teachers should see themselves as teacher educators, and be trained in mentoring' (p. 73).

Task 2.4: WHAT MAKES A GOOD MENTOR?
- Thinking about the issues raised above, and your own experiences, list what you think are the key roles, skills and dispositions of a good mentor within the Scottish system
- Again, thinking about the above discussion and your own experiences, what do you think are the key roles, skills and dispositions required of a good university-based tutor?
- Now think about the similarities and differences between these lists, and what this might mean for the mentor/tutor relationship
- Where, when and how should/might teachers be educated in mentoring?

Moving forward: challenges and suggestions
It seems, then, that while mentoring has had a secure place in early phase teacher education in Scotland for some time now, its role and purpose have not been particularly well conceptualised or articulated. In many cases, it is positioned as an administrative role: jobs to do, forms to complete. In other places it is a quality assurance role with assessments to be made against standards. However, in arguing for a more educative conceptualisation, Feiman-Nemser (2012) suggests that, 'in helping novices learn to teach, mentors take on an educational role, form a pedagogical relationship [and] engage in an educational activity' (p. 241). This more educative role must surely therefore involve professional learning on the part of the mentor; this is not a skill learned, nor knowledge gained routinely, in ITE. Indeed, Langdon & Ward (2015) argue, from a New Zealand context, that despite growing recognition of the need for a more overtly educative conception of mentoring, practices remain largely focused on giving directive advice to new teachers on classroom management, sourcing and using appropriate resources, and passing on institutional knowledge about how things work in the particular school/department. This seems, then, to be a problem within and beyond the confines of Scotland, and limits possibilities for expansive learning on the part of both the mentee *and* the mentor.

The evidence, I suggest, is pretty compelling: we know that good mentoring, both in ITE and in the induction phase, has the capacity to support positive early phase learning for teachers, thereby also enhancing retention. We also know that mentoring can be an exciting, fulfilling and expansive experience for mentors. However, we also know that we do not currently have a well-developed and shared understanding of the role, nor do we have clear and accessible national systems in place to prepare mentors systematically for this role. At the time of writing, stakeholders are considering proposals emanating from an 'independent panel on career pathways for teachers' (Scottish Government, 2019) which include a proposal to introduce a role of 'lead teacher'. If these proposals are approved, then there would appear to be a pretty persuasive case for introducing a 'lead mentor teacher', or perhaps a 'lead teacher in supporting professional learning'.

Not only does the Career Pathways report provide a potential route to making mentor education more systematic and valued, but the issue of mentor quality and capacity is beginning to be recognised more explicitly elsewhere too. The most recent Parliamentary inquiry into 'initial teacher education and early phase teaching' is revisiting a recommendation made in the Scottish Parliament's Education and Skills Committee's 2017 report (Scottish Parliament, 2017) in which it recommends that 'emphasis on the importance of mentoring should feature in local working time agreements. This could include a specific allocation of non-contact time' (p. 4), thereby promoting the idea that this role needs to be better supported and valued. The importance of quality mentoring (and coaching) has also been acknowledged by the Strategic Board for Teacher Education, and it has mandated Education Scotland to work on proposals for a coaching and mentoring strategy for Scottish education.

As well as a focus on developing experienced teachers' capacity to mentor, there is also merit in thinking about how we might include some of the skills of mentoring, or supporting colleagues' professional learning, as a pre-requisite in all ITE programmes: student teachers can learn about the role of observation, for example, and use this knowledge not only to help shape the observation processes involved in their own placement learning, but also use it to support peer observations within their own cohorts. We have the capacity, and potentially the policy provision, to upscale mentoring as a central element of the teacher role.

It would appear that we are at a cusp in Scotland where there is clear recognition of the importance of quality mentoring, and the possibility of resource being put into its further development. I sincerely hope this proves to be the case, but in developing a more systematic approach to mentoring, there are some important issues to be considered:

- Do we want to continue to entrench a 'mentor-matching' approach where one early phase teacher is supported by one nominated mentor, or do we want to consider how we might establish more widespread collaborative mentoring through developing mentoring cultures?
- Is it time to revisit the idea of 'hub schools' that specialise in supporting teacher learning?

- Should we consider mentoring (and perhaps coaching and other skills relating to supporting professional learning) to be a core teacher skill, starting in ITE?

Finally, to return to Moir & Gless (2001), when we think about early phase teacher learning: into what are we inducting new teachers, 'and for what purpose?' From there, surely, will follow an appropriate conceptualisation of the mentor's role, around which we can build suitable systems for supporting and valuing mentors as school-based teacher educators.

Summary and Key Points
Mentoring is a longstanding component of early phase teacher learning in Scotland, but its development and enactment are quite complex. Key points raised in the chapter include:

- Mentoring in Scotland is set within a wider context in which learning to teach is seen as both an intellectual and a practical pursuit
- Mentoring in this context is more than a directive or administrative task, rather it might be seen as an opportunity for expansive collaborative learning on the part of both the mentor and the mentee
- Professional standards can serve as a helpful focus for professional learning conversations, but they should not be used as a mentoring checklist
- To be a good mentor, it is not enough simply to be a good teacher, the role also requires specific knowledge, skills and dispositions
- There is arguably a need for greater resource to be invested in ensuring that all teachers are well-prepared to work as mentors, and that the system values this role overtly

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