Facilitating the Change: Teaching as a Masters Level Profession

(Session 2, 2A15 at 13.00)

Caledonian University, Glasgow; May 21st 2010.

Notes taken from Round Table Discussion

Pre-amble

These notes are taken from the round table dialogue during the session.

Names of institutions and persons are not included to preserve anonymity. As a general comment, the 'roundtable' proved an extremely useful source of professional exchange and highlighted many concerns and insights into MTL provision in the current and future educational setting.

The facilitators of the discussion would like to take this opportunity to thank all participants for their contributions to the forum.

At the beginning of the session the roundtable agenda was introduced by the lead presenter. The PowerPoint slides for this part of the session are attached to this paper.

The debate which followed focussed on;

(i) reasons why people voluntary study for a higher degree and implications for making MTL mandatory,
(ii) How work-based practice, as proposed by the MTL, can achieve academic rigour?
(iii) What mechanisms are there for school-based mentors/coaches to support teachers in the research situation?

Roundtable notes

- There are potentially a number of different approaches/models of credit allocation on PGCE and MTL courses. Some universities, for example, allow all credits gained at PGCE level to contribute to elements of the MTL. Others only allow a certain amount to be carried forward. Also there were differences in the number of assessment tasks for PGCE and equivalent courses.
- It was noted that there seem to be a number of different prior experiences and expectations of teachers following MTL courses. Many NQTs, for example, question why there is need for such a programme and argue that they would

be perfectly good teachers without having the MTL qualification. Moreover, the work needed to complete such a programme would be a distraction in their early years of teaching where they need to 'get to grips' with and prepare for the realities of teaching on a full time basis.

- Although it may be argued that the MTL will enhance the professional abilities of practising teachers, it was felt by a number of participants in the discussion that engagement with the MTL should not occur until teachers have had a number of years in the profession. This will give them a grounding; making the work more relevant to work they are doing. It was suggested that 4 to 5 years after the NQT year would be a more realistic time period to start the MTL course. It was noted that PGCE courses are relatively short and trainees may only start to understand some of the complexities of teaching after more years as a practitioner. There is not much advantage in taking the MTL straight after the NQT year; teachers need to have 'bedded into' their teaching role to take advantage of the experiences offered by the MTL.
- In view of this point we may be playing 'lip service' to our notion of life-long learning and targeted professional development in that MTL work would be better understood by teachers further into their careers. They should by then have a better understanding assessment, pupil motivation and learning styles etc. in the school situation.
- Perhaps, there needs to be more clarity of what MTL seeks to achieve at the practitioner level. Questions such as; why do I need to do the course? What professional advantage can I gain by doing this course rather than other courses? - need to be addressed
- Many teachers are not new to the profession, but may also benefit from doing the MTL. Some elements of the discussion focussed on how the provision could be extended to those teachers who have not recently gained QTS or completed their NQT year.
- The essence of MTL should include the notion of teachers as good researchers and reflective practitioners; action researchers; be able to critically reflect on reasons for making decisions and have a deeper understanding of teaching and learning issues.
- There are a number of similar courses to MTL and the discussion argued the merits and possible demerits of MTL when compared with other Masters level programmes. For example, some institutions do professional enquiry type courses. These have been successful and been running for some time. It may be that some of these courses would be a better option for teachers than some MTL courses.
- A further issue raised was that there may be a possible conflict of interest for those institutions running professional doctorate programmes or educational leadership type courses. In view of this it was argued that MTL programmes ought to related to such provision in certain cases.

- A number of workload issues were discussed. How teachers would find time to complete the course given heavy teaching schedules? What resources would be available for course delivery and if these would be standard across the UK? How would funding in schools be allocated?
- A main research focus for evaluating the effectiveness and usefulness of MTL should be its impact on enhancing pupils learning and its effectiveness in raising the standard of education in the UK.

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