

The Edge Hill University Approach to Mentoring Trainee Teachers

The Weekly Cycle for Mentoring



Review

Using the Weekly Development Summary (WDS) as a record, the trainee and the mentor review the EHU curriculum content for the week, this provides a focus and is sequenced incrementally to manage cognitive load.



Questioning

The weekly Development Summary includes questions that the mentor can use to review prior learning and assess that the student has the relevant knowledge in order to benefit from opportunities to practise in a given week.



Observation of Experts

Trainees should be given focused and deliberately chosen opportunities to observe expert colleagues and analyse what they have seen throughout their teaching practice. Vitrally, these observations should be planned and selected by the mentor as instructional opportunities.



Practice and Feedback

The mentor will observe the trainee's practice, focusing on a particular technique, strategy or component of teaching, as appropriate to that week's curriculum. Sherrington and Caviglioli (2021) argue that mentors need to 'call your shots' and make the focus of the observation clear beforehand.



Reflection

A weekly development summary (WDS) of progress against the EHU ITE curriculum is completed, and the trainee reflects on progress. The cycle begins again at step1.

Managing Cognitive Load
1

Revisiting Prior Learning
2

Instruction
3

Rehearsal
4
Monitoring and Feedback

Progress against the EHU Curriculum
5

Underpinning Principles

Recent research, What are the Characteristics of Effective Teacher Professional Development (Sims et al., 2021) identifies clusters of 'mechanisms' that are the 'active ingredients' in effective professional development. These mechanisms include; managing cognitive load, revisiting prior learning, setting and agreeing goals, presenting information from a credible source, providing affirmation and reinforcement after progress, Instruction, Practical social support, Modelling, Monitoring and feedback, Rehearsal, Providing prompts and cues, Prompting action planning, Encouraging self-monitoring, Prompting context specific recognition

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has used this recent research to map the elements of effective professional development design.

Programmes incorporating at least one possible mechanism for each aim are effective, and including more of the mechanisms, the greater the possible impact (Sims et al. 2021). These characteristics map onto the coaching activities we are developing our mentors to use.

Vitrally, mentors need to understand the EHU Curriculum for a given week and the context in which a trainee's professional development for that week is taking place. The curriculum has been carefully sequenced to manage cognitive load and connects university-based teaching and school experience by identifying what students can be expected to know and therefore what they should have opportunities to practise in a given week of school experience. Mentoring takes place on a weekly cycle, guided by the EHU curriculum and the Weekly Development Summary (WDS).



REVIEW

1

Using the Weekly Development Summary (WDS) as a record, the trainee and the mentor review the EHU curriculum content for the week, this provides a focus and is sequenced incrementally to manage cognitive load.

Revisiting the EHU ITT curriculum can help trainees 'acquire the ability to recall past learning automatically' (p.26), as this is 'particularly important for material that will be used in subsequent learning' (p.9).



QUESTIONING

2

For Tom Sherrington (2019:27) one of the strongest messages from Rosenshine's Principles is that 'effective questioning lies at the heart of great instructional teaching'.

The weekly Development Summary includes questions that the mentor can use to review prior learning and assess that the student has the relevant knowledge that in order to benefit from opportunities to practise in a given week.

As necessary, further reading and research to prepare for a coaching session can be undertaken, as part of building knowledge.

Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction (2010:26) highlights the importance of regular opportunities for wider reading on a topic as: 'The more one rehearses and reviews information the stronger the interconnections' between prior knowledge and new learning.

The mentor and trainee will then action plan for teaching practice that week. This will identify the opportunities a trainee will need to practise and make progress with the knowing how component of the EHU curriculum.



OBSERVATION OF EXPERTS

3

Trainees should have focused and deliberately chosen opportunities to observe expert colleagues and discuss what they have seen throughout their teaching practice. Vitally, these observations should be planned and selected by the mentor as instructional opportunities. Rather than simply having a generic schedule of observation, trainees should be purposefully guided to observe specific elements of an expert colleague's practice, as appropriate to that week's curriculum.

Observation is a key opportunity for trainees to revive instruction. Students should be prepared and encouraged to interrogate expert colleagues and make use of the best available evidence to analyse what makes a particular approach successful or unsuccessful in a particular context, and to reflect on how this approach might be integrated into their own practice.

Students should be encouraged to work with expert colleagues to apply evidence to critique a particular approach to understand what makes it successful or unsuccessful. Observation can include in-class observation, expert modelling, simulation or video recordings

To identify misconceptions the trainee is encouraged to ask the mentor questions.

Mentors are encouraged to draw on the resources of the school's community of practice to provide additional, practical social support (Sims et al., 2021). For example, arranging for instruction by other experienced members of staff with a specialism e.g. SEND; or, formative feedback e.g. on role play can be given by other staff.



PRACTICE OF FEEDBACK

4

If teaching habits are to be embedded successfully, Sims et al. (2021) also draw attention to the importance of ‘context specific repetition’, repeating target behaviours in classrooms at least twice to support embedding practice.

The mentor will observe the trainee’s practice, focusing on a particular technique, strategy or component of teaching, as appropriate to that week’s curriculum. Sherrington and Caviglioli (2021) argue that mentors need to ‘call your shots’ and make the focus of the observation clear beforehand.

Instructional coaching gives the option of shorter, focused observations – 20 minutes to fit in with other ‘low-stakes’ opportunities.

The mentor provides constructive, targeted and precise feedback (Sherrington and Caviglioli, 2021; Knight, 2007). Attention is given to the use of positive affirmation for effort and reinforcement after progress has been made to enhance motivation (Sims et al., 2021).

Feedback is dialogic. Questioning prompts are used to engage the trainee in the process of review and probe understanding of their use of the target strategy.

Sherrington and Caviglioli (2021) advise using ‘three-point communication’ approach, sitting side by side to review a visual prompt ie the script or checklist, a video, or chosen WALKTHRU.

This feedback focuses on the selected specific aspect of practice, the teaching not the trainee and feels constructive.

Feedback results in action planning – the mentor identifies further practice or other opportunities that are needed to make progress.

5



REFLECTION

A weekly development summary (WDS) of progress against the EHU ITE curriculum is completed, and the trainee reflects on progress. The cycle begins again at step 1.

References

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