Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, 3-6 September 2008
SIG: Mentoring and Coaching Research Symposium: changing registers of discourse

From 'feedback' to 'dialogic review': an approach to appropriate matching of mentoring and coaching feedback.

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Key words: mentoring; coaching; stages; dialogue; feedback; reflection.

Abstract:

Stages in teacher development appear to be well- evidenced and a useful model for mentors on primary ITT trainees' programmes to use. Their implications for development of the mentoring approach do not appear to have been taken up so readily, however. The author, using a practitioner research approach with an expedient sample (n=7) of primary trainees, explored replacing the traditional lesson 'feedback' approach by one based upon components of a dialogic teaching approach. Findings suggested that the approach may have relevance for mentoring and coaching all but the very beginning stages of training and that it offers a model of a more generally applicable approach, e.g. for co-coaching and mentoring at all professional levels.

Prologue:

Listening to a recording of his mentor feedback after observing a trainee on her final school placement the author realised that there was insufficient time for full development and discussion of her responses to his questions. Time available precluded being able to both feed back on the lesson and discuss issues. That realisation precipitated an experiment - dropping all direct feedback to make room for fuller discussion. This paper presents the outcomes of that evaluation.

Introduction:

Furlong and Maynard (1995) argued that as trainees progressed so should the mentor's approach change – transitioning into that of a co-coach (applying the more recent, CUREE, 2005, definition), in which the relationship is that of partners investigating ways to develop practice. However, the limited research evidence (e.g. Edwards and Collison, 1996; Harrison, 2002) and case studies (e.g. the SCIcentre video 'Mentoring in Primary Science') of actual ITT mentor feedback suggests that a common approach to post lesson observation feedback continues to be, as the term *feedback* implies, for a mentor to directly review the lesson through presentation of its points. The Teacher Training Agency Trainer's Manual (TTA, 2004) also emphasises *feedback* on the observed lesson through an authoritative, though empathetic, mentor-trainee relationship, rather than the co-coaching approach that research indicates may be more appropriate, particularly during a final placement. Use of terms such as '*supervision*' for the mentoring process on school placements and '*feedback*' for mentoring conversations, may unfortunately also have reinforced that more authoritarian approach.

The author sought to explore what approach a small sample of other experienced, trained mentors were currently using with trainees on their final placement, and secondly whether if he used a more discursive, co-coaching approach it might be effective.

Reflection and performance:

One key assumption behind using a more discursive approach in mentoring is that it promotes reflection in the form of self-analytic review of events to inform and promote development by the mentee. Many studies have examined the effects of strategies designed to promote reflection itself (e.g. Kitchener & King, 1985; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Loughran, 1996; Moore & Ash, 2002; Husu *et al*, 2006; Moon, 2006) as evidenced within journals. There have, however, been few studies of the effects *on actual practice* of promoting a reflective approach.

Some indirect research evidence supports the notion that promoting reflection can be effective in improving performance. Loughran (1996), through extensive analysis of students' learning journals and interviews over a one-year ITT programme, explored the effects of his modelling of reflection, as their tutor, upon the promotion of his students' reflection and implied performance gains were achieved by them.

A summary, by Blasi (1980), and reviews by Rest and Narváez, in1994; by Lind, in 1993; and by Oser, in1994 (all cited in Reiman, 1999: 602) of the effects of promoting reflection by students on their subsequent moral behaviour all showed positive outcomes. Reiman (1999: 608-9) also analysed a further seven studies carried out between 1989 and 1997 with pre-service and in-service teachers which showed 'that participants in the treatment groups also gained professional skills associated with more effective and responsible practice' (Reiman, 1999: 609), though no supporting evidence or analysis was given for this claim. The study group mentors all used a structured framework to guide their responses, and that was deemed to be important.

A further review in the field of ITT was provided by Korthagen *et al* (2001) from work by their own team at the University of Utrecht, on their programme for secondary trainees in teaching mathematics which used what they called an approach, 'the most important ingredient …[of which is] the promotion of reflection on practice' (Korthagen *et al,* 2001: 90). Comparison of graduates of this programme with their national average, determined through a national evaluation programme, indicated that 71% of the Utrecht graduates (n=81) scored *good* or *very good*, compared to the national average (n= 5135) of 41% (p<.001) (*ibid*: 88) in their teaching performance grades. Furthermore, 'the programme itself scored *good* to *very good* on 25 of 34 criterion variables … in two external evaluations, in 1992 and 1997, by two official committees of experts' (*ibid*: 88).

Thus, whilst logical arguments for the importance of reflection on performance have been accepted almost universally, published empirical evidence of its actual effects on performance still seems very limited indeed. What little there is does suggest positive benefits to actual practice arising from the promotion of reflection. One aim of this study was therefore to explore, as far as is possible with a very limited sample, the empirical, quantitative evidence it might provide for the outcomes of promoting reflective thinking through reflective dialogue using, as Reiman recommended, a structured framework on a placement.

<u>Reflective dialogue:</u>

Several studies (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Burchell and Westmoreland, 1999; Moss *et al*, 2004; Smith, 2005; Husu, 2006) argued that dialogue is needed - to promote reflection; to explore trainees' beliefs and understanding; to model reflective practice; and to encourage trainees to apply their own ideas and practice. Hatton & Smith found use of peers as 'critical friends' by student teachers was 'a powerful strategy for fostering reflective action'(Hatton & Smith, 1995:41). They continued by identifying elements of that dialogue as:

> engaging with another person in a way which encourages talking with,
> questioning, even confronting, the trusted other, in order to examine planning for
> teaching, implementation, and its evaluation (*ibid:41*)

Their conclusion that 'there is some evidence that reflective capacities can be fostered by providing students with strategies and experiences which develop the required metacognitive skills' (*ibid:*43) supports the notion of a structured approach to the dialogue. Similarly, Korthagen and his colleagues also claimed empirical support for oral dialogue:

> Students did report that they found it was useful being taught and then applying
> processes for reflecting, though they preferred oral rather than written tasks, and
> working with someone else, peer or (preferably) a supervisor (cited in Hatton &
> Smith, 1995:39)

Burchell and Westmoreland (1999:165) also concluded that tutors actively need to promote, through debate, the process of reflection on practice in order to encourage trainees to go beyond 'reflection on practice being tied to the competences'. Similarly, Moore and Ash (2002) reported empirical evidence from their trainees who were all 'agreed that much of their most useful reflection was carried out not on their own but in the company of and with the active support of others' (p12). In the classroom Nystrand (1997: 57-8) empirically compared grade 8 and 9 literature classes being taught using the more widespread 'recitative' style with a sample being taught using more open, dialogic, approaches and found that students in the latter classes gained in performance by comparison with the former. Regression analysis revealed the key factor to be discussion, even in small amounts of 2 minutes a day

Empirical evidence seems to point emphatically at dialogue, preferably with an experienced mentor, as a means of promoting reflection, so we turn to consider the nature of that in more detail next.

<u>Dialogue as a means of promoting reflection</u>

Cressey and Boud (cited in Boud, 2006:7) implied that open-ended questioning might be the most pertinent approach to promote 'productive reflection'. Furlong and Maynard (1995:92/3) also used open questions which they stated led to challenges which:

at this stage of their learning appeared to be the most fundamental and difficult, in that they attempted to force students to evaluate their whole understandings about teaching and learning (1995:93).

The implication was that that this was with students who had reached stage five in their developmental sequence, i.e. late on in the programme. They called changes which occurred in student teachers' priorities and concerns as they developed on school placements '*stages*', a notion that has been challenged (Burn, K *et al,* 2003) although such developmental changes in priorities of concern *on teaching placements* appear to be well- evidenced (for a summary of research on stages see: www.cfkeep.org/users/peterstopp/mentoring%20conversations) and can provide a useful model for mentors of ITT trainees to use. The word *stage,* however, suggests stronger and more distinct steps than even Furlong and Maynard's own discussion (Furlong & Maynard, 1995:98) implied. That, and evidence from other similarly placement-focused research (Guillaume & Rudney,1993; Tochterman, 2002), suggests that *priorities* might be a more suitable term.

Furlong and Maynard's questions (e.g. *What exactly are you wanting the children to learn?; How does this lead on from, or extend the children's present understanding? ….)* focused specifically upon children's learning and appropriate organisation for that. Many of the answers to such questions should already be evident therefore from trainees' written files, rather than from lesson observation. They therefore seem more pertinent to the planning stages of teaching than to post-lesson observation discussions. If they are not, then these questions would, indeed, be pertinent, but otherwise many of them might be redundant. Perhaps they relate to priorities prevalent at the time of their research – in the early 1990s – and practice has moved on since then to new learning and development priorities such that a Stage 6 needs adding to their developmental framework (as illustrated later, in figure 7)? It should be acknowledged that Furlong and Maynard themselves referred to an *autonomous teacher* stage (*ibid*: 191-3), though presumably largely as a post-qualification stage at that time.

It was necessary, therefore, to identify new open-ended questions for use in contemporary post-lesson observation sessions. Drawing on evidence from Nystrand (1997: 57-8), Alexander developed a 'dialogic teaching' approach (Alexander, 2006), using open questions. Alexander's analysis offered a relevant set of guiding principles, well-grounded in sound educational research – albeit for classroom practicalities - for the construction of a structure for dialogic review as a mentoring process applicable to lesson evaluation on placements. Key elements (with descriptors adapted to be more applicable to dialogic mentoring conversations) are that dialogic teaching is:

Collective: addressing learning tasks jointly;

Reciprocal: in which participants listen to each other, share ideas and consider alternative viewpoints;

Supportive: articulating ideas freely, without fear of embarrassment, or judgement; and helping each other to reach common understandings;

Cumulative: building together on ideas into coherent lines of thinking and enquiry;

Purposeful: aimed at productive learning.   (summarised from Alexander, 2006: 26-7)

The author's aim therefore was to explore the hypothesis that an approach based upon Alexander's dialogic teaching approach, utilising open-ended questions that promoted trainees' reflective analysis of their own practice and its development was both feasible with trainees and might even enhance their learning more effectively than other approaches.

For the 'sample' group the author developed a simple sequence of open questions focusing upon trainees identifying and evaluating their own professional development. Rather than specifically evaluating the lesson just observed, as the student teachers' tutor mentor he tried to embed his perceptions of their strengths and areas for development within his discussion with the trainee - as examples and/or evidence. The mentor's key roles were to trigger, and monitor, the trainees' evaluative thinking; to assess its accuracy and relevance against his own analyses, based on observation – in the file and in the lesson – and discussion with the teacher mentor; to try to broaden horizons of understanding by making links, and, where necessary, to give suggestions as to strategies to consider for implementation, in order for them to address their identified developmental goals.

The main questions (Drever, 2003: 11) formulated, and the rationale for each, were:

- What do you feel pleased about in terms of your development so far? – *to identify where they felt to have made progress, beginning with positive elements, and support with his observations of progress on that.*

- What are you currently trying to focus upon getting better at? – *to identify their current targets, and support through his observations of progress on that.*

- What, do you think, will be your next priority for development? – *to see if they can identify a priority and whether that would be appropriate.*

- How might you go about that? – *to see if they can identify a strategy, and/or support for doing so, and the detailed resources to enable that.*

The sequence was quite important: to begin with the most open question on a positive note (Fletcher, 2000: ch 6), and to encourage mentees to see the positives, too. Where appropriate in their development of responses the author would explore their reasoning through 'probes' (Drever, 2003: 11) and, if needed, give strategies, confirmations, counterpoints, etc. Active listening prompts, such as nodding, saying Yes, or Mm, were used almost constantly to encourage responses, or continuation. A summary of the structured framework, or review schedule, drawn up according to the procedure recommended by Drever (2003), is presented in figure 1.

Figure 1: The review schedule:				
Mentor Prompts:	**Trainee Response:**	**Mentor follow-up:**	**Examples of probes:**	**Related 2007 Standards**
What do you feel pleased with so far, in terms of your development?	Identifies an element of progress	Does it match observed evidence? – affirm if it does, with examples.	*What is it about that which made it a priority for you?*	Q7a: Reflect on and improve their practice and take responsibility for identifying and meeting their developing professional needs;
	Nothing identified	Offer observed evidence of area of competence seen – to model the process on a positive note.	*Can you think of anything else now?*	
Anything else?	Repeat prompt question several times			
What are you currently trying to get better at?	Identifies an element of progress	Does it match observed evidence? – affirm if it does, with examples.	*What strategies are you using for that?*	Q8: have a creative and constructively critical approach towards innovation; being prepared to adapt their practice where benefits and improvements are identified;
	Nothing identified	Offer observed evidence of a key problem observed.	*Can you think of a strategy which might address that problem?*	
Anything else?	Repeat prompt question several times			
REVIEW:	Have the trainee's identifications of needs matched the 2-3 key priorities you, as mentor, would place as next steps for the trainee's development? Have any previously set targets/strategies been met/used?			
What, do you think, will be your next priority for development	Identifies a priority for development	Does that seem workable? – affirm if it does	*How might you go about that?*	Q9: act upon advice and feedback and be open to coaching and mentoring.
	Does not identify a priority, or strategies, or gives inappropriate ones.	Offer a more suitable priority, with very detailed explanations of why.		

Research Questions:

The research questions were:

1. Was the dialogic review process effective for the trainees involved?

2. In what ways does a dialogic review process differ from conventional (ITT) lesson feedback?

The two questions will be considered separately here.

Was the dialogic review process effective for the trainees involved?

<u>Research Methods:</u>

In addition to post-placement interviews with the student teachers in the sample group, quantitative data was available to enrich the study, especially to explore issues of significance. Initial analysis of the sample group was possible using marks obtained from their penultimate school placement. A t-test analysis revealed that the final sample group of seven averaged a score on their previous placement of 63.3% which was very close to the remainder of the cohort's 63.9% (also excluding the three fail category students). The sample group was therefore closely representative of the overall cohort in terms of previous attainment.

Trainees on this programme receive percentage marks for each of their placements, arrived at through a structured process of assessment of each individual against QTS Standards, one by one, by both the teacher and tutor mentors and then agreed. The programme practice is that teacher mentors make five weekly observational feedbacks, with the author's three observational and one assessment visits as a tutor mentor for the programme being additional to them. Marks are then grouped, and finally translated into percentages. The author was aware that, because of this study, his own marking might be unwittingly biased and so for each Standard waited for the teacher to ascribe a judgement before giving his. His own judgement was in fact in agreement in all but two cases. In one of the exceptional cases (E) he encouraged more generous judgements, whilst with the other (H) he encouraged less generous judgements from the respective teachers. Overall these two probably balance each other out. There are far too many (n = 42) individual Standard judgements to make for the mentors to have been clear in anything but general terms, as they considered each in turn, what the overall assessment would become. The process, therefore, though judgemental, is systematic, criterion-referenced and moderated, so the resulting marks are probably as valid and reliable as it is reasonably possible to obtain.

<u>Findings:</u>

In summary the marks showed that, whilst the mean of raw scores for the sample group, at 72.9%, was higher than that of the rest of the cohort, at 66.6%, the difference falls just short of statistical significance. However the sample group, although similar in original profile to the rest of the cohort, had averaged very slightly lower marks on their penultimate placement. Comparison of changes in scores, from penultimate to final placement, showed value-added gains, rather than direct attainment. The sample group's average change was +9.57% whilst that for the remainder of the cohort was +3.02%. Unlike the remainder of the cohort, there were no trainees in the sample group whose marks went down – all but one showed improvement over their penultimate placement result, the one exception remaining at the same level. The difference on this comparison is highly significant, at the 98% probability level, suggesting that the trainees did improve their practice to a greater extent than the average for the remainder of the cohort. They may indeed have benefited from the approach in terms of their improved achievement. More certainly the change in approach cannot be said to have disadvantaged those experiencing it.

Post-placement interviews with the student teachers explored in more detail their views on the approach. A summary of points raised by trainees themselves is shown in figure 2.

Student	Preferred /enjoyed	Made me evaluate	Opportunity for personal response	Own input on targets	Prompted new perspectives	Other comments	Needed to adjust to it
						Figure 2: Points raised by the trainees relating to the format of the feedback sessions.	
A	✓		✓			Discussion made links	✓
B	✓	✓		✓			✓
C	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
D		✓				Focus on week, rather than lesson	
E	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
F	✓	✓	✓				
H	✓	✓			✓		✓

Trainees' overwhelming preference for the format is apparent, as are some of the possible reasons for that. It is evident that most felt that it prompted their self-evaluation – one of them actually used the term 'modelling' for that in her response to questions posed during the post-placement interviews. Examples of responses are:

> C - *'That [was] good, because I used that time to self-evaluate, really, 'cos it's something I struggle with, you know, and it's good for me to go 'Well, what wasn't that good in that lesson; What have I done well'; and I think that it's good to do it yourself…. I enjoyed thinking about it actually, and evaluating the lesson.'*

> E - *actually encouraging you to say – o.k. what do you think of that lesson, made me have to evaluate the lesson, verbally, and made me think about sort of my development and why targets have been set for the future.*

Opportunities the approach gave to them for expressing their own points and for identifying their own targets also seem to be appreciated:

> A - *it's about, you know saying how you feel the learning went; how o.k. you feel you're getting on; how you're improving on your targets; it's more, it's quite … informal.. It gives you the chance to say what you feel.*

Both trainees A and D also stated that the focus on dialogue gave them a feeling of having more opportunity to express their views, despite the fact that the overall review sessions were no longer than usual post-lesson observation feedback, and often shorter:

D - *after you'd said, 'That's not how I'm going to do it. I'm not going to go through the lesson. I will ask questions, and' … I felt a bit more comfortable, and I felt that I could tell you more than I would probably tell another tutor, just because you seemed to be taking the time out to find out about that kind of thing. Other ones, they're kind of, you know, flying by the seat of their pants, they come in and they've gone and that was it, but … You know, when there was a problem, you wanted to find out what the problem was and get to the bottom of it.'*

There are a number of points which arose in several of the commentaries given above, such as '*made me think about, sort of, my development',* and '*at first I was a bit nervous'* which suggest where some of the differences lay. The different nature of the approach for the sample group is reinforced by the final column of figure 2, which shows that five of the seven referred to a need to come to terms with it. The following extracts from two post-placement interviews illustrate this:

B – '*Well, at first I was a bit nervous… and I felt like I … 'cos personally I'm quite unconfident, and I never give myself positive feedback so, when I.. when you asked me questions in response to the lesson, I would say negative things, but then after you'd done it several times, I just felt more comfortable with that structure, and I could feel it easier … so I suppose that it was a positive good for me really*

E - *Because it was not what I was used to it was difficult to start with … I preferred them - they just took some getting used to.'*

One of the pointers some of the trainees gave to one of the differences seems to be that they were expecting a judgemental response.

In what ways does a dialogic review process differ from conventional (ITT) lesson feedback?

Research Methods:

Digitally recording three successive post lesson observation meetings in which the dialogic review approach was used with each of the sample in place of a feedback approach, the reviews were analysed for their component structures. Recordings of all the sample groups' teacher mentors and of two other experienced tutors and two each of their teacher mentors' lesson feedback sessions were also made for comparative analysis. A selection of eight sessions from the author and eight from other mentors were used for more detailed comparative study.

In addition to the post-placement interviews with the sample group, already referred to, a post placement questionnaire (n=37 responses) to all trainees (n = 54) on the programme afforded a means of evaluating aspects of reliability.

Following a similar approach to Harrison *et al* (2005:276) to identify the focus for each of the prompts and responses it was possible to classify elements of statements into category groups for numeric analysis and comparison and thereby compare the components of the dialogic review approach with those used by the other mentors sampled. Category groups which emerged comprised:

- Acknowledgements – comprising mostly *Yes, Mm, O.K.;*

- Descriptions – simple descriptive statements e.g. of something that happened in the observed lesson;

- Suggestions – ideas for how to go about something;

- Value statements – comments, mostly positive, such as 'I liked the way that you ….' ;

- Evidence – where descriptive observations are used to support a point;

- Questions – of all kinds – open, closed, rhetorical …;

- Explanations – elaborations upon a point being made; and

- Target-setting – describing next steps for progression.

It was found that almost all the elements of dialogue in the sixteen reviews analysed could be fitted into these categories. It was completed first on several recorded transcripts as practice and then direct from audio-recordings. However, all the recorded sessions were also listened to over and over again, noting key points; issues; and ideas in the process. Clearly, value judgements are involved and so validity and reliability issues are present. To try to minimise these, every successive spoken element was scored. If, within one person's continuous utterance, meaning statements moved from one category to another each of those categories involved was recorded. For example, one element of discussion was:

> *Yeah.(A) Cos they seemed <u>to be relating really well to you</u> (VS). In fact …*
> *M said that yesterday when she was observing <u>they didn't come to her at</u>*
> <u>*all they came to you*</u> *(Ev) .*

This was recorded as a combination of A, for acknowledgement; VS, for the value statement involved; and Ev, for the evidence being given of the teacher mentor's comments. Ideally, this process ought to be repeated by other analysers and the results compared in order to check both validity and reliability, but that was not possible within this individual study, so as far as possible words from the trainees themselves were used, which Drever (2003: 63) recommends as a partial safeguard.

Direct observations of one feedback session of each of the seven teacher mentors in the sample group and additional observations of five other feedback sessions by two other tutor mentors, plus two of their teachers, had suggested a similarity in the style of review being used by them all, so there were no obvious criteria for their selection. The selection therefore was made on the basis of representing the range of schools, classes and mentor experience.

Analysis of four teacher mentors' feedback sessions – two being from the sample group and two from other tutors' groups - together with four of those two tutors' feedback sessions (two sessions from each), making a total of eight sessions in all, were compared with eight of the author's own feedbacks to three of the sample group trainees (A, B and E). The eight sessions with the three trainees from the sample group, comprised three successive review sessions of two, and just the second and third of the other trainee. The sessions observed of the other tutors were their second, and for the teachers were their third or fourth.

Findings:

An analysis was made (figure 3) of how representative the selected three trainees were of the whole sample group. They appear to be broadly representative of the range of bands from their previous placement. Student D was kept out of this sample, to be analysed in more detail separately as a particular case.

Figure 3: Analysis of sampled sub group			
trainee	Reflectivity shown	Confidence shown	Penultimate placement grade
A	✔	✔	**B**
B	✔	**X**	**C**
C	✔	✔	B
D	Not at first	Not at first	C
E	✔	✔	**D**
F	✔	✔	D
H	✔	✔	D

Students selected for transcript analysis are shown in bold.

Scores for each meaning category were calculated, comparing the sample group and the main cohort, subdivided into trainees' and mentors' spoken elements. They are summarized in figure 4.

Figure 4: Analysis of post-lesson observation discussions by meaning categories: comparing 8 sessions with the sample group with 8 sessions by other mentors (4 by tutors, and 4 by teacher mentors)								
	Trainees' contributions to dialogue							
Meaning categories:	Target setting	Evidence	Value statement	Suggestion	Explanation	Question	Description	Acknowledgement
Sample group totals	23	24	36	20	47	4	106	151
rank	6	5	4	7	3	8	2	1
Other mentors totals	6	3	17	2	17	2	40	194
rank	5	6	3=	6	3=	7	2	1
	Mentors' contributions to dialogue							
Sample group totals	11	15	42	59	69	91	58	112
rank	8	7	6	4	3	2	5	1
Other mentors totals	13	34	145	56	37	32	147	27
rank	8	5	2	3	4	6	1	7

Comparative analysis of differences between categories of statements used in the 'conventional' approach with those of the 'reflective dialogue' of the sample group revealed (figure 5) differences. The most extreme difference was presented by the Acknowledgement category, but to do a full analysis of those responses, many of which simply comprised the word 'yeah', would be very difficult and it would still remain speculatively inferential, so the study instead focused particularly upon most of the other categories. Target-setting and Giving Suggestions ranked the same (8th and 3rd, respectively) for both the sample group and the others and the category of Giving Evidence was also very similarly placed (6th and 5th, respectively). Other categories, however, showed almost inverse rankings, as revealed graphically in figure 5.

Figure 5: Ranked selected categories of post-lesson observation dialogue			
ank of categories	Conventional practice	hange in rankings	Sample group
	Descriptions		Questions
	Value statements		Explanations
	Suggestions		Suggestions
	Explanations		Descriptions
	Evidence		Value statements
	Questions		Evidence

Clear differences were evident therefore between the dialogic approach and approaches used by other mentors. In the latter a 'feedback' approach predominated, focused on mentors giving their response to the observed lesson. Typically, an opening question was '*How did you feel that went?'* and after the student teacher had responded, their mentor launched into a direct review of the lesson, mostly taking the lead throughout, with very few questions being put and very little response from the student teacher, apart from acknowledgements. In contrast, dialogic reviews:

- gave trainees more chance to participate in dialogue, and set their own agendas within that;

- foregrounded explanation rather than evaluative comments from the mentor; and

- emphasised the trainees' own abilities at self-evaluation

As a measure of reliability, a questionnaire survey of all the trainees on the placement also asked them if '*any of the lesson feedback sessions were different from those experienced previously*'. Responses from the sample group and from the other trainees who responded are shown in figure 6.

Figure 6: Questionnaire responses to Q: *Were any of the lesson feedback sessions different from those experienced previously?*			
	Much the same	Some aspects differed	Very different
Sample group (n=7/7)	0	6 (86%)	1 (14%)
Remaining trainees (n=37/54 = 69%)	24 (65%)	8 (22%)	4 (11%)

The modal class has clearly shifted in the sample group from 'much the same' to 'some aspects differed'. The majority added few comments for this question, but the sample group's comments are revealing. Five of the sample group commented in their questionnaires upon the nature of the feedback, as follows:

A - *'The feedback was more personal and dialogic in style. It allowed me to talk and express how I feel.'*

B - *'More structured and question based than previous placements. I had a greater input in feedback.'*

C -*' Being asked how I think the lesson went – I enjoyed this because it developed my own evaluative skills. Also being asked how I could develop the points that needed improving'*

E -*'Encouraging me to say, made me evaluate the lesson … I preferred them.'*

H -*'[They] were much more helpful to aid my development than previous placements'*

It is clear that at least 5 of the seven felt the nature of the feedback sessions was different from what they had previously experienced and that was reinforced in their post-placement interviews (figure 2). The other two were D and F, but F was the one who noted the feedback in the column entry (figure 6) as 'very different' and, even though she did not refer to it in the questionnaire, her post-placement interview revealed that D did indeed find it very different, too. She reported:

'*It kind of stumbled me, at first .. when you first left me … yeah … and .. It's never really been done before … It was completely different, and I can remember when you said 'I'm just asking a question' and I thought <u>'What?'</u>*

Similarly, all the others reported in these post-placement interviews on the difference in style, as follows:

A – '*To be honest at the start it was quite .. not threatening, but it was quite unusual, because, like, I've never had this before,*

B - *I suppose that it was a positive good for me really because I started to give myself more positive feedback myself, 'cos you were asking me questions about it, rather than just telling me what I have and haven't done.'*

C - *I think that it's good to do it yourself, because, you know, that's what you need to do when you're teaching.. you're not going to have someone there going with you, so it needs to be … to start it now, really. So, that's good.*

E – 'I tended not to go through the lesson with you.'- '*Yeah. Which is probably a bit more helpful, because a lot of the time we'd just go through a bit of paper, and I can read that in my own time. I don't need to read that there and then.*

F – '*I liked it actually, because it provided me with the opportunity to say how I felt about what happened … instead of just picking apart everything I'd written ..'*

H –'*I think that's* [the questioning approach] *better … 'cos it … by questioning it's making me think about it, and making me take more time to reflect on what I've done and why I've done it, so I thought that was a better way of doing it..*

Conclusion:

From all the responses, including both questionnaire responses and post-placement reviews, it seems quite clear that the change in format was not simply a change for the author, but a change from general practice for the sample group trainees, too.

The study indicated that reflective dialogue was not only feasible, within the same time frame as 'feedback', but was viewed more positively by the trainees, and may even have contributed to a slightly greater improvement in achievement on the placement for them.

These findings suggest that the dialogic review framework offers some value for mentoring and coaching all but the very beginning stages of training (as illustrated in figure 7) and that it might offer a structure for a more generally applicable approach, e.g. for co-coaching and mentoring at all professional levels.

Figure 7: Trainee development and its implications for mentoring *(at primary level)*: derived and developed from Furlong & Maynard (1995) and Pollard (2002)

Stage	Trainee focus	Trainee issues/concepts	Mentor focus	Mentor roles and skills:
Stage 1: Early Idealism:	Identifying with the pupils, wanting to be 'friends' and liked by them. Rules, rituals.	Aspirations are coloured by personalities of significant teachers in their own education. Being liked. *Gaining confidence*	Encouragement; 'Presence'; voice; professional approach & expectations	Modelling, observation and collaborative teaching **Feedback approach**
Stage 2: Personal Survival:	Wanting to be seen as the teacher. Establishing authority.	Achieved by fitting in with the teacher's routines; concerned with self-esteem and class control. Reactive to children rather than proactive. Children's response & on-task rate.	Encouragement; Class behaviour management & 'match' of work to class; Whole class attention & management	Modelling, observation and collaborative teaching **Feedback approach**
Stage 3: Dealing with Difficulties:	The focus is still on themselves and their performance, but in terms of competences.	Following teacher's procedures, acting like the teacher but without understanding; dominant fear is 'will I pass?' Trying to impress. Interpreting comments personally. Displacing blame. Organisation.	Encouragement, esp. of teaching as trial and error; *Differential match of work to groups; lesson structures and timings; visual and practical aids.*	Observation and feedback on trainee's performance. Coach, facilitating reflection-on-action – facilitating layers of classroom knowledge; varying between didactic and discursive styles. **Feedback/dialogic mix approach**
Stage 4: Hitting a Plateau:	Gaining confidence, students 'relax', sometimes leading to inappropriate shortcuts in planning or evaluations, but still play safe in what they try as teaching techniques.	Individuality beginning to emerge. Superficially managing. Evaluations based on children's interest or engagement, rather than learning. Avoidance of risky strategies e.g. practical work. *Assessment focus is on 'they', as class*	*Moving focus of trainee to individuals and progression and to taking 'risks', trying things out.*	Observation and challenge in terms of *explanation and generalisation. Comparing espoused theory with theory in action.* **Dialogic review approach**
Stage 5: Moving On:	Limited perspective re development. Understanding pupil learning.	More focus on development of learning/progression *and practical, 'risky' teaching approaches.*	Mentors challenge trainees, especially in terms of planning, using challenging questions *to explore understanding and ability to see generalities*, promoting engagement on children learning with understanding.	Critical friend. **Dialogic review approach**
Stage 6: Autonomous Teaching	Broadening the repertoire. Investigating the grounds for their practice	*Professional development.* Deepening understanding of complexities of T & L, inc. social, moral and political dimensions.	Encouraging trainees to take on more responsibility for their own development.	Co-enquirer. Partnership supervision &/or teaching, e.g. thru' trainee i/d focus for observation. **Dialogic review approach**

In the review schedule framework given in figure 1 the questions relate to several of the new QTS Standards quite directly and therefore provide a means for assessing them, which sole use of the feedback approach would not appear to do. It is puzzling therefore why a dialogic process had not been taken up more than is evident here. Several possibilities may be pertinent. Time pressures, always present, can often lead to more direct exposition and limit discussion. Alternatively, there were some indications that other mentors felt, like the author himself, they were more open and dialogic than actual analytical evidence of practice revealed. There is also evidence that the shift from recitative to dialogic styles of teaching dialogue can be very difficult to effect (Alexander, 2006:99).

Student teachers' evident preference for the dialogic approach also needs further exploration. Novelty alone might be one factor. Another is the evidence from their responses of the respect being shown for their own abilities to analyse and plan their development, and the modelling of that which the process offered. However, there may also be a further element. Open questions only remain open if their responses are also taken up in an open manner, so the open nature of follow-up probes within the framework is important. In addition, the author suspects that the detailed elaborate explanations and examples given might also have been of importance, as a process for 'structuring' or enriching mentees' understanding through the processes of application, seeing connections and making generalizations in the manner described by Norman (in Bennett *et al,* 1984), illustrated in figure 8.

Figure 8: Norman's theory of complex learning (from: Bennett *et al,* 1984:23)
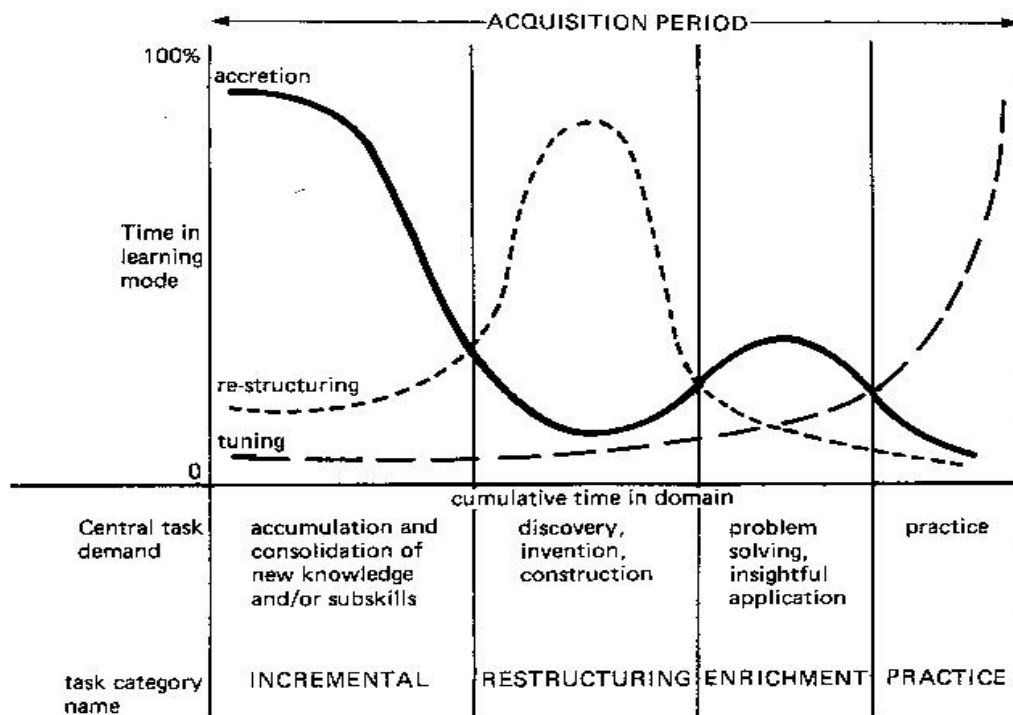
These aspects offer exciting possible areas for further research.

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