

An Evaluation of the YSJ ITE Partnership Mentor Training and Professional Development Programme: Promoting mentor autonomy, critically and professional agency

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Introductions

- Jane Collins and Brian Rock
- Senior Lecturers in ITE at York St John University
- Secondary specialists
- Mentor Development Leads since January 2024

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Focus of workshop

- How can the design and delivery of the mentor curriculum support mentors' development as inquiring professionals?

- To critically engage with the tensions and opportunities within mentoring practices in teacher education, and to identify future directions for research and professional development.

Setting the scene: Reaccreditation process

- Reaccreditation criteria and the ITT Market Review.

- Key challenge: mentors knowing and understanding student teachers' ITE curriculum to ensure that

  "trainees have access to mentors with expertise in the subject- and phase-specific approaches set out in the planned curriculum, so that trainees are able to learn the best-evidenced ways of teaching their subject or phase and are enabled to apply the general principles set out in the CCF/ITTECF" (DfE, 2023).

Defining mentoring

Mentoring is defined in the ITT criteria and supporting advice guidance and CCF/ITTECF as:

- "receiving structured feedback from expert colleagues on a particular approach – using the best available evidence – to provide a structured process for improving the trainee's practice"

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Mentor curriculum design

- Make an individual list of the critical questions your institution considered when designing and delivering your programme in light of the reaccreditation guidance.

- When prompted, in small groups:
  - Compare your responses. Any overlap/patterns?
  - Consider how your institution's context shaped your list of questions.
  - Now compare to some of ours...

Critical questions around mentor curriculum design

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- What counts as “expertise”?
- Which subject and phase specific curriculum approaches should we cover in the mentor curriculum?
- What are the “best-evidence ways of teaching”?
- How should mentors use “evidence” to provide feedback, and how should this feedback be structured?
- How can we develop meaningful training and professional development for mentors across difference programmes and with different expertise?

The wider context: card sort

- Each card on your table captures information about specific wider factors that cause pushes and pulls on the design and delivery of a mentoring training programme.

Quickly glance through the cards and arrange them:

- As a group, which were most impactful on your decision making and why?
- Can you come to a consensus?

Feedback – which impacted decisions most? And how?

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Balancing Policy and Values

Discussion:

1. How do we, as teacher educators, design professional development for mentors that aligns with policy demands while staying true to our educational values and ethical commitments?

2. What practical strategies help us resist or reframe neoliberal pressures in ways that promote genuine learning and professional growth for mentors and student teachers?

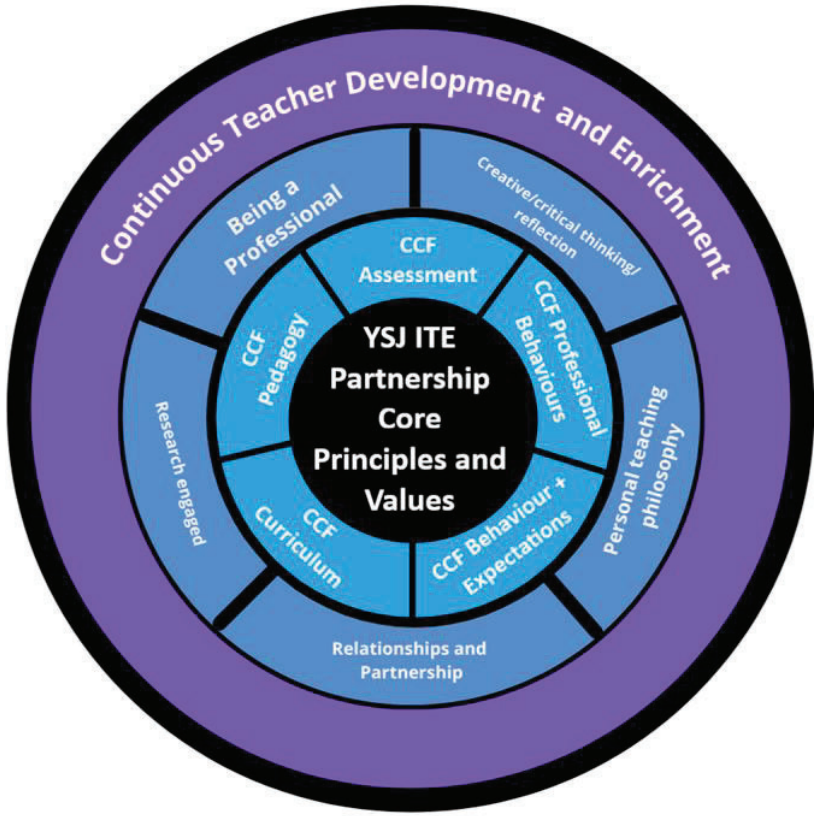
Our YSJ design features

- In table groups, look through and engage with key design features cards of our mentor curriculum (handout).

- What do you think is our rationale? What contextual push or pull are we trying to respond to?

YSJ ITE curriculum design

- Construction of ITE programmes and modules ensuring appropriate coverage, sequencing and staged progression
- Knowledge and skills build upon each other
- Every taught session is framed within the ITE curriculum so that student teachers are aware of:
- when/how key concepts are revisited;
- how they received their curriculum entitlement;
- how theory and practice are purposefully integrated.



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Example modules

- **Professional behaviours Module 3**: addresses gap in research knowledge around how to support student teacher professionalism
- **Behaviour and Expectations Module 4**: deliberate practice
- **Assessment Module 7:** directive and non directive approaches to feedback

Activity from Module

- Engage with an activity from one of our mentor modules in real time.

- Afterwards we are going to critique the approach taken in this module, before sharing how our mentors have evaluated the YSJ mentor training and professional development programme.

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Critique of our module activity

- What critical considerations do you have about:
  - The balance of “best evidence” from CCF/ITTECF and opportunities for professional inquiry?
  - The balance of mentoring approaches?
  - Opportunities for professional inquiry via…?
    - Analysis, deconstruction and articulation of practice
    - Preparation of model examples of practice
    - Reflection and self-regulation

Evaluation of programme

- Accreditation meetings and the creation of materials.
- Having to make decisions which were contested.
- Quality assurance school visits by Lead Mentor, including further bespoke training
- Live trackers for mentor training records of completion
- Qualitative data (e.g. mentor reflections)
- Partnership agreements with schools
- Evaluations after training episodes

Key questions

- 11.What has been the main impact of the mentor training programme on your professional development?

- 12. What have you done differently as a mentor as a result of engaging with the mentor training programme?

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Methodology and Data Analysis approach

- Theoretical deductive thematic analysis driven by our theoretical or analytical interest (professional inquiry)
- Less rich data overall but more detailed analysis of aspects of the data.
- Coded for the specific research question mapped to theoretical approach.
- Semantic approach – looking at what participant said/wrote – relating it t previous literature (Braun and Clarke, 2006)

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How has the mentoring been received?

- Overwhelmingly positive responses to face to face training conferences
- Online modules deemed helpful when they were engaged with
- External examiner evaluation
- Frustration with PebblePad logistics and functionality
- Some issues over clarity of what mentors need to do

Developing Professional Agency

1. Enabled reflection on practice
2. Encouraged student teacher autonomy and self-reflection
3. Understand and use different mentoring strategies based on needs to the student teacher
   - "Been prepared to demonstrate/ model strategies. Allowed the students to take greater ownership and self reflect"
   - "I have been able to understand and use mentoring strategies to help students reflect on their own practice. Finding my own mentoring style which is now much more refined. This has helped me facilitate students to reflect on their own practice rather than dictating what they need. Better able to adapt my mentoring style depending on how far the student is along their teaching journey."

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Moving towards critical research literacy

- Adopting a more critically reflective, research-informed stance
- Impact on student teacher learning and development

- "provided up-to-date, research-based training which has improved and benefitted me in my mentoring role"
- “I have reflected greatly in my own practice and engaged with a lot more research to inform my practice which is something I usually do not make a lot of time for. It has helped me to understand both how to impact the learning of my students and the development of other staff members.”
- "I have focused more on the recommended research and used this to help develop the trainee."

Professional agency or replication?

- Feeling more empowered to give advice
  - "my target setting has improved and my approach in using a more collaborative and diagnostic style for feedback to student teachers"
  - "There needs to be more bespoke modules, e.g. quality assurance visit and watching the mentor give feedback followed by a chosen asynchronous module which will help develop a specific skill as identified together with the lead mentor then repeat or check in with lead mentor to see if how the training has been put into practice."

Limitations and barriers

- Technology

- Impact of time and workload
  - “Great training content but difficult to complete training in time to put it to use due to teaching responsibilities.”
- Preferences for face to face learning over asynchronous learning
  - “Face to face training was very useful and helpful to speak to colleagues - online training was too theoretical and waffly to be useful in the ground.”
- Refresher training rather than impact for some mentors
  - “Refreshed some of the training strategies.”
  - “It was a good reminder to go back to basics and think more about the aspects of teaching that become routine with more experience. However the training did not have the same impact of actually working alongside the student teachers.”

Our Response: Development plan

- Training pathways based on experience (new to mentoring, developing, experienced)
- Followed Ofsted TMV, development of modules to refocus on target setting, subject/phase specific mentoring and working with class/host teachers
- Refinement of functionality of PebblePad
- Development of enrichment PD modules e.g. EDI, mentoring career changers, SEND, research summaries, including videos and podcasts
- ITE Inspection toolkit

Action planning

To critically engage with the tensions and opportunities within mentoring practices in teacher education, and to identify future directions for research and professional development.

Instructions:

1. Form small groups of 3–5 participants.
2. Discuss each prompt below, drawing on insights from today's workshop and your own professional experiences.
3. Record key ideas, tensions, and possible action.
4. Be prepared to share one insight or question with the larger group.

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Discussion Prompts

1.Building Research Literacy in Mentors

- What kinds of professional learning experiences foster mentors' capacity for inquiry, reflection, and evidence-informed practice?

2.Researching Mentoring for Autonomy and Agency

- What kinds of research are needed to examine whether mentoring practices truly cultivate autonomy, agency, and criticality in both mentors and mentees?
- How can collaborative or practitioner research approaches illuminate the complexities of mentoring in diverse educational contexts?