

Assessing School-based Learning: A Developmental Framework for Student Teachers

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ABSTRAK *Susulan daripada perubahan dalam sistem pendidikan guru di UK sejak beberapa tahun kebelakangan ini, kerajaan berharap institusi pengajian tinggi dan sekolah pendamping akan memikul tanggungjawab bersama bagi merancang dan menguruskan kursus, memilih, melatih, dan menilai guru pelatih. Pada hakikatnya, tanggungjawab kedua-dua pihak tidaklah seimbang. Sekolah mempunyai tanggungjawab utama melatih guru pelatih untuk mengajar mata pelajaran pengkhususan, menilai murid dan menguruskan kelas; dan menyelia guru pelatih dan menilai kecekapan mereka dalam kemahiran tersebut. Institusi pengajian tinggi pula bertanggungjawab menentukan kursus-kursus bagi memenuhi keperluan syarat akademik, mendapatkan pengiktirafan, mengurniakan sijil kelayakan kepada guru pelatih yang berjaya dan menempatkan mereka di beberapa sekolah. Kertas ini menilai dan membincangkan beberapa aspek dalam sistem pendidikan guru yang baru tersebut dan menjelaskan satu reka bentuk proses penilaian yang diamalkan dalam program PGCE di University of Wales, Swansea untuk menilai pelatih-pelatih program tersebut. Proses penilaian tersebut adalah berdasarkan andaian bahawa penilaian lebih bertujuan untuk menyokong dan bukan untuk mengukur perkembangan profesional pelajar.*

Introduction

The Government expects that partner schools and HEIs will exercise a joint responsibility for the planning and management of courses and the selection, training and assessment of students. The balance of responsibilities will vary. School will have a leading responsibility for training students to teach their specialist subjects, to assess pupils and to manage classes; and for supervising students and assessing their competence in these respects. HEIs will be responsible for ensuring that courses meet the requirements for academic validation, presenting courses for accreditation, awarding qualifications to successful students and arranging student placements in more than one school (DFE 1992, para 14).

During the last ten years, successive Government interventions have transformed initial teacher education in Great Britain. As a consequence, it now has at least three distinctive features. Firstly, there is a great deal of emphasis on time spent in school. In the case of secondary postgraduate courses this is as much as 66 percent of the overall course. Practical, school-based work therefore assumes a central if not a dominant role in professional preparation. Secondly, training, whether it takes place in school or in a

higher education institution (HEI), is understood as the achievement of a series of practical 'competences' that relate closely to the day to day work of newly qualified teachers. These Government defined competences now form the basic curriculum and assessment framework within all initial teacher education courses. Finally, Government imposed changes mean that schools, rather than higher education institutions have an important function in the in training and assessing students in the achievement of those competences. Teachers, acting as 'mentors', play a central role in the education of the next generation of teachers.

Competency led, school-based teacher education has come to stay in Britain. As such, it provides the context in which the search for achieving more effective forms of training must be located. The last few years, therefore, have seen a substantial growth in research and writing on the processes of school-based learning for student teachers (Jacques, 1992; Shaw 1992; Wilkin 1992; Hagger et al 1993; McIntyre et al 1993; Watkins and Whalley 1993; Furlong et al 1994; Wilkin and Sankey 1994; Yeomans and Sampson 1994; Furlong and Maynard 1995). While much of this has focused on mentors in supporting school-based learning, comparatively little has examined systematically the role of assessment in this process. Yet, as our opening quotation demonstrates, assessment is a responsibility that teachers now share with those in higher education in Britain. Any systematic development of school-based teacher education must therefore, address this vital area.

A serious consideration of the role of assessment of student teachers' school-based learning is not justified simply because the Government has placed this responsibility on teachers for the first time. It is now widely recognised throughout the field of education that notions of assessment can not and should not be divorced from the processes of teaching. In this paper, we report on the assessment processes that have been developed as part of the University of Wales, Swansea's (UWS) school-based secondary PGCE programme¹. Underlying our work has been the assumption that assessment should support rather than simply measure students' professional development. Moreover, we believe that if assessment procedures are to be supportive, they must be carefully linked to the principles of professional development that underlie a training course as a whole. It is for these reasons that assessment has assumed a central role within the UWS scheme.

School-based learning and stages of student development

Underlying the UWS scheme is the recognition of the developmental nature of students' school-based learning. In recent years, a great deal of research into how students learn to teach has shown that students typically go through a number of different stages of development (Katz's 1972; Fuller and Bown 1975; Calderhead 1987; Burden 1990; Guillaume and Rudney 1993;)². However, in developing principles on which to base the UWS course, we were inevitably most influenced by research being undertaken within our own university (Maynard and Furlong 1993; Furlong and Maynard 1995). Maynard and Furlong characterise students as focusing on a series of 'focal concerns' as different stages of their development. The 'focal concerns' can be grouped usefully under the following headings:

- early idealism
- survival and learning to see
- recognising difficulties
- hitting the plateau
- moving on

These can be elaborated in the following ways.

Early Idealism

The Swansea research suggests that before they have begun their training, it is not uncommon for student teachers to be highly idealistic about teaching. For many students this involves wanting to identify closely with the pupils and their needs and interests. This identification with the pupils is hardly surprising: for the vast majority of students in training, their only experience of the teaching process has been as pupils themselves. Once they enter the classroom, this idealism quickly fades!

Survival and Learning To See

The first days and weeks in the classroom are extremely challenging for students, both professionally and personally. According to Maynard and Furlong (1993), one of the common complaints that students make in these early days is that they find it difficult to 'see'; they find it difficult to disentangle the complexities of teaching and understand the processes involved. Either they assume that it is straightforward, something that anyone can do, or they are overwhelmed by its complexity. Learning how to observe an experienced teacher and understand the different skills that he or she is using is an achievement in itself; it is something that students need to be taught how to do.

Another important feature of their early classroom experiences is that students frequently become obsessed with their own survival. Rather than wanting to identify closely with the pupils, they become dominated by their concern to manage them. Achieving classroom management and control becomes their main concern, and teaching and learning activities are judged almost entirely in terms of whether they contribute to achieving that end. The Swansea research shows that students often find this early period of learning to teach highly stressful. Many of the students studied found it hard to come to terms with themselves as authority figures. They had to get used to a new persona, 'me-as-teacher', and for some it was not a character they particularly liked. As a consequence, it is not uncommon for students to go through a period of resenting the pupils for forcing them to be more authoritarian than they really want to be.

Recognizing Difficulties

Maynard and Furlong suggest that at the next stage, trainees become sensitive to the varied demands made on them. They are keen to give an impressive performance, but their growing awareness of what is involved often means that they become overwhelmed by the complexity of the task facing them. As a result, they begin to focus on the issue of teaching methods and materials, complaining about classroom constraints or lack of resources. They also become overly concerned about the end-of-course summative assessment at the expense of formative assessment and self-evaluation. Constantly they ask "Am I doing well?", "Will I pass?"

Hitting The Plateau

Eventually, most students manage at least to 'act' like a teacher, they learn how to control the class and engage the pupils in some purposeful activity. However, the Swansea research suggests that, once students have achieved this level of competence, they may stop developing: they can 'hit a plateau'. They have found one way of teaching that works and they are going to stick to it! The challenge is then for the mentor and/or their tutor to move them on from 'acting like a teacher' to 'thinking like a teacher'.

Maynard and Furlong (1993) suggest that the difference between these two states is that experienced teachers devote most of their attention to thinking about their pupils' learning rather than focusing on their own 'performance', in other words, they are able to 'de-center' from themselves to the pupils. If students are to improve the quality of their teaching, it is essential that they too learn to de-center. However, evidence from the Swansea studies (Furlong and Maynard 1995) would suggest that without external support, students often find this transition difficult.

Moving On

Maynard and Furlong (1993) identify one further stage of learning to teach which involves the development of the student as a 'reflective practitioner'. In recent years, critics have described the term 'reflective practitioner' as a slogan in search of a definition. Certainly, defining the term with any precision is difficult and, however it is defined, a course of initial professional preparation can do no more than lay the foundations for its development. Nevertheless, the Swansea research confirms that, as they gain in confidence, students are capable of taking more responsibility for their own professional development; of broadening their repertoire of teaching strategies; of deepening their understanding of the complexities of teaching and learning; and of considering the social, moral and political dimensions of educational practice.

In the past the development of these abilities and understandings has been seen as the sole responsibility of those in higher education. However Maynard and Furlong (1993) suggest that, although the contribution of those in higher education is essential, if these abilities and understandings are to be developed in a way that is meaningful to students, they will need support from classroom teachers too.

Because students typically go through these different stages of learning to teach, the notion of student development within the UWS course informs our vision of what tutors and supervising teachers should do. However, it is important to emphasize that, in arguing for a developmental approach, we are not suggesting that tutors and teachers should simply give students the sort of support that they ask for. If students are to develop fully, there will be times when both tutors and teachers need to be assertive in their interventions, providing students what they 'need' rather than what they necessarily want. However, we would suggest that in essence, teaching students how to teach is no different from any other form of teaching; it needs to start from where the learners are and take their typical pattern of development into account. This need to inform the strategies for assessment as well as the other strategies used to support students in school-based learning.

Key Principles in Assessment

As Furlong (1995) has argued elsewhere, in Britain it seems that teacher educators may be forgiven for taking a very simplistic view of student assessment. The Government's list of competencies seem to suggest that all that is needed of an assessment scheme is a procedure summatively to assess students' 'performance' in the classroom. However, the Swansea research on student development discussed above has led us to very different conclusions.

It is central to the UWS secondary PGCE scheme that assessment is one of a range of key strategies that need to be used in supporting students' school-based learning. From the body of research outlined above it is possible to identify three key principles that need to be included in an effective assessment scheme for student teachers. Firstly, such a scheme should be developmental, flexible enough to provide different

types of formative and summative feedback to students at different stages in their professional development. Secondly it should focus both on the student's 'performance' as a teacher - their ability to demonstrate the key competencies identified as important by the Government - and on pupils' learning. We would suggest that including an explicit emphasis on pupils' learning in the assessment procedure is essential if the course is to help students 'move on' in the ways we have discussed above. Finally, the Swansea research indicates that students themselves must be centrally involved in a dialogue about their own professional development. If they are to develop as reflective practitioners, then they must learn, through an ongoing dialogue with their tutors and mentors, to assess and take responsibility for their own professional development. Strategies to support students in the development of the skills of self-assessment and reflection therefore need to be built into the assessment procedures if they are to be fostered effectively.

Developing an effective assessment scheme is therefore far more complex than a simple competency model might suggest; all three of the principles outlined above need to be incorporated in ways that can be utilised effectively and efficiently by tutors, teachers and students alike.

Within the UWS scheme, evidence for the achievement of the teaching competencies defined by the Government comes from a variety of sources - direct observation, examples of lesson planning and schemes of work etc. However in building such evidence into a complete assessment scheme, two strategies have been particularly important. The first involves the use of a range of different observation schedules and the second involves a procedure for profiling, student self-assessment and action planning.

Observation Schedules

The use of lesson observation schedules in the assessment of student-teachers is well established. Virtually all teacher education programmes have devised their own schedules, with varying degrees of specificity and with varying aims. What is distinctive about the UWS scheme is that three such schedules have been devised. Each of these schedules is different in character and is intended to be used in ways that will support students at different stages of their professional development.

The 'Open' Schedule

The first schedule is the 'open' schedule. As its name implies, this schedule is largely unstructured, having only four main headings: Focus; Strengths; Recommendations and Points for Discussion; Action plan. The teacher or the tutor conducting the observation completes the first three sections; students are expected to complete the Action Plan themselves, identifying how they will follow up on the issues raised in the post lesson discussion. The effectiveness of this type of observation schedule is improved if, prior to the observation, there is a pre-lesson discussion of the aims and intended outcomes of the observation and of the nature of the evidence to be obtained.

The Open schedule is designed to be used principally as a tool to assist in formative assessment, providing specific feedback on a particular activity, area of competence or skill such as questioning and explaining or the management of group activities. However, because it is open, both the focus and the way it is used can be different at different stages of a student's development. In the early stages of a student's work, we have found it appropriate for the teacher or the tutor to select the focus for attention and to determine the

method of observing and giving feedback. At a later stage of development, the students themselves may be involved in these decisions.

Because it focuses on one aspect of teaching at a time, the Open schedule is particularly appropriate to the early stages of learning to teach; it helps students to disentangle some of the complexities of the teaching process. Given what we know about students' early concerns in the classroom - the difficulty of 'seeing' and their overwhelming interest in 'survival' in terms of classroom management and control - important early focuses for the Open schedule have been found to be:

- class rules and routines
- basic classroom control skills
- starting and ending lessons
- basic teaching skills, especially explaining and questioning

At a later stage of development, the schedule can be used for more focused skills training, continuing to provide feedback that is specific and diagnostic as well as being supportive. Appropriate focuses at a later stage of development include:

- transition from one activity to another
- organising the work of pupils in groups
- managing time
- monitoring the work of the whole class

As we indicated above, towards the end of a student's course, the same observation schedule can be used to provide feedback on issues students themselves have selected for particular attention. The student can also determine how the evidence should be collected and the means of doing so. When used in this way, rather than as a means of assessment, the Open schedule becomes a strategy for supporting the student's further professional development in that it draws them into a dialogue about their practice encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning. This aim can be further advanced if the character of the post lesson debriefing also changes. The emphasis moves towards supporting the student's self-evaluation and away from simply giving judgments. As we indicate in our discussion of profiling below, involving students in aspects of their own professional development can be a key strategy in helping them to move on beyond the plateau of basic competence.

Competency-based Lesson Schedule

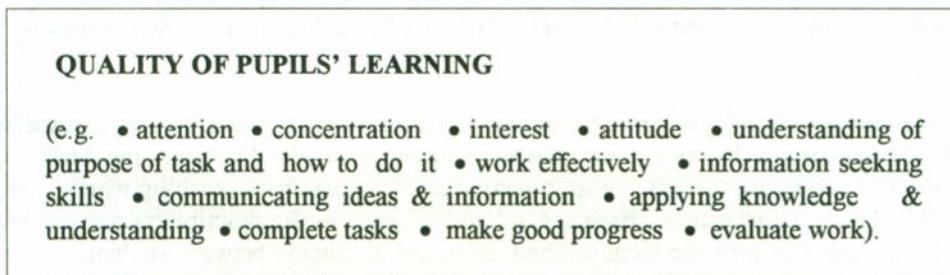
In the early stages of their training programme, student teachers on the UWS scheme rarely teach alone. Instead they are expected to engage in collaborative teaching: working alongside an experienced teacher, taking part in their lesson planning and taking responsibility for some aspects of their teaching. This might involve working with a small group of pupils or teaching one part of the lesson. However, during the course of the first term, as they develop their competence and confidence in the classroom, students are normally given more and more responsibility for whole class teaching. Once they have done so, there is a need as well as an opportunity for the use of more broadly focused assessment.

Feedback has shown that, from quite an early stage in their training, students want and need judgments in relation to the assessment criteria used in the course. They need to know how well they are doing.

According to current Government regulations (DFE 1992), all British student teachers have to be formally assessed on their achievement of a series of teaching competencies 'at a level appropriate to newly qualified teachers'. These competencies, which are set out in a Government circular, are generic rather than specific. They are grouped under the following main headings - subject knowledge; subject application; assessment and recording of pupil progress; further professional development.

For our own assessment procedures, these competencies have been used to form the basis of an observation schedule. In developing our own schedule, we, like other higher education institutions in Britain, have redrafted the Government's list to make it more usable. This has involved breaking down broad areas of competence such as 'subject application' into more manageable parts and by expressing the competencies in a language more accessible to students and teachers.

Figure 1: Competency-based lesson schedule



Not all of the competencies included in the Government list are amenable to assessment by classroom observation. Obvious examples are those that fall under the heading of Further Professional Development (DFE 1992).³ However, those competencies which can be demonstrated in lessons have been identified and grouped under the following headings: knowledge of subject, lesson planning and preparation, teaching skills, managing pupils' learning, assessing pupils' progress, and class control and management. As the example above shows, the schedule itself has been designed as a check-list, with each aspect graded 'very good' (VG), 'good' (G), 'satisfactory' (S) and 'unsatisfactory' (U), it is intended that these terms are used in relation to the level expected of a newly qualified teacher.

The procedure for using this schedule involves observing the student teach a whole lesson, judging the levels of performance and recording these on the check-list. The schedule also contains space to record comments on significant events in the lesson and/or to suggest or recommend actions to be taken. In the debriefing, teachers and tutors are encouraged to range over several aspects of the lesson and give students a clear indication of their levels of performance in relation to required career entry standards. Students then write brief notes, focusing on key areas for development or improvement.

Once they are ready for this procedure - towards the end of their first term of training - students are formatively assessed in this way at least once a week by each of the teachers with whom they work.

Teachers in particular have appreciated the development of this schedule because it is comprehensive, focused, versatile and easy to use. When used regularly, the evidence provided by these observations helps

teachers and tutors to make judgments about whether the students are demonstrating the required competencies.

Pupil-focused Schedule

The competency based schedule focuses almost entirely on teacher behaviour rather than on pupils and their learning, mirroring the government's concern with teacher performance. Swansea research on student development suggests that if students are to move on beyond the 'plateau' of routine teaching, then it is important that they learn to 'de-centre'; they must learn to focus their attention on pupils' learning rather than their own performance. One of the central differences that Maynard and Furlong (1993) found between students and experienced teachers was that experienced teachers were indeed able to 'de-centre' from their own performance and think about what and how their pupils were learning. However Maynard and Furlong also argue that, without some form of external intervention, student teachers are unlikely to make this transition. In the UWS scheme, the Pupil-focused schedule is a key strategy in helping students to de-centre. As such it is intended to be used at later stages of their development.

The Pupil-focused schedule, was adapted from the lesson observation forms used in OFSTED inspections⁴ (OFSTED 1994). The schedule has two main sections: Quality of Pupils' Learning and Standards of Pupils' Achievement. In addition, there is a smaller section entitled Quality of Teaching which is seen as contributing to the other two dimensions. Both general and subject specific descriptions are included in the schedule and it is these that form the focus of observation and discussion between students, tutors and teachers. An example of one section of the schedule is given in figure 2 below:

Figure 2: Pupil focused schedule

D MANAGING PUPILS' LEARNING	VG	G	S	U
1 Working groups appropriate for learning purposes				
2 Activities matched to age & ability effectively managed				
3 Timing and pace of activities and lesson				
4 Expectations appropriately demanding				
5 Achievement of learning objectives				

Experience with this schedule demonstrates that for students who have achieved a satisfactory standard in the basic teaching competences it can indeed be an important spur to further professional development. For many of our students, the formative assessment provided through the use of this schedule has encouraged them, for the first time, to focus on the pupils rather than themselves.

The observation schedules described above can be used as a basis for formative and summative assessment. We believe that it is particularly important that the competency-based and pupil-focused schedules are openly available to the students and that the criteria on which they are based are made clear to them. Students have a need to know the criteria on which they are being formally assessed.

One of the advantages of the competency approach to teacher education is that it indeed makes those criteria explicit.

Profiling, Self Assessment and Action Planning

In a course of professional preparation, the assessment of teaching competences by lesson observation is only one aspect of the overall support for and assessment of the knowledge, skills and qualities required of a successful teacher. It is for this reason that these lesson observation procedures have been incorporated into a procedure of profiling.

Profiling at UWS involves three main elements; student self-assessment, profile review meetings, and action planning. Through these profiling procedures we aim to establish a process of critical reflection, analysis, evaluation and review, thereby developing students' abilities to assess themselves and to devise plans for their own further professional development. Profiling is therefore a key strategy in developing students as 'reflective practitioners'. It is also valuable in providing an important link between a students' initial teacher education, their induction into their first post and their continuing professional development.

Once again, an important principle underlying our profiling procedures has been the idea that it should be developmental, responding to and supporting students' changing learning needs.

At the centre of the UWS profiling procedure is the 'profile review meeting'. These meetings are held three times a year, at the end of each term, and involve three parties - the student, the designated mentor and the university tutor. In preparation for the meeting, mentors and tutors assemble a range of evidence on the student's progress. However, if the student is to feel ownership of the action plan that is intended to arise from the review, then we believe that they too must be equally involved and take a greater than usual degree of responsibility for their own work and progress. As preparation for the review, students are therefore asked to undertake a self assessment exercise and to select for presentation a range of evidence which best illustrates the quality of their work. This evidence is available in their School Experience File. As a way of recognising students' different needs at different stages of their development, the support materials and guidance given to help students in their preparation are different for each profile review meeting.

Self Assessment

Our first experiments with student self assessment proved problematic. Students, we discovered, found it particularly difficult to acknowledge their strengths. As a result, self assessment procedures are now more structured. For the first self assessment at the end of the first term, students complete a broadly structured profile review form, the headings that correspond to the main areas of competence. For the second review, students are given a copy of the detailed competency based assessment schedule used by tutors and mentors. They are expected to reflect on this before undertaking their own self assessment. For the last self assessment, at the end of the third term, students are asked to focus on their own qualities in relation to the promotion of pupils learning. In each self assessment they are explicitly asked to identify strengths as well as areas that need further attention.

The Profile Review Meeting

If students are to benefit from the review process and use it as a basis for action planning, we have found that certain principles need to be observed. All three parties - students, mentor and tutor - need to be well prepared. In addition to the results of their self assessment, students must have available the evidence they wish to present in their school file, while mentors and tutors must have available copies of completed observation schedules and other notes, written reports from other teachers with whom the student has been working and copies of any earlier action plans. The meeting itself needs to be conducted in privacy without interruptions; adequate time needs to be given and mentors and tutors need to observe the '80/20 rule' - encouraging the student to talk for at least 80% of the time. It is also important that mentors and tutors develop the skills of listening, questioning, analysing, summarising, and providing feedback.

Action Planning

At the end of the profile review, mentors and tutors work with students in order to identify challenging but attainable targets that can be incorporated by the student in their action plan for the next phase of their development.

It is an important principle of our approach to action planning that the student is encouraged to identify those aspects of practice that are relevant for him or her at this particular stage of development. The content of action plans can therefore be quite variable. They may include things for example the student plans to *do* in the next phase of their school experience such as improving specific teaching skills or employing a wider range of teaching methods. Alternatively, they may include things the student wishes to *find out* more about such as subject content, or whole curriculum issues. Finally they can include *skills* the student wishes to develop, such as word processing skills or the use of audio-visual aids. Whatever the focus, if they are to be useful to the student in guiding development, we have found that action plans need to be written appropriately. They must include: targets that are specific and realistic; a programme of action; a time scale.

Conclusion

One of the dangers in Britain of the imposition of a Government defined list of competences on initial teacher education is that they may be taken by some institutions as the signal to impose a crude form of summative assessment on students (Furlong 1995). Without careful handling, competences can simply become the measurement of success or failure on a series of externally imposed criteria. We would suggest that while such an approach may help the Government in its attempt to impose its will on the shape of teacher education programmes, it will do little to ensure the development of students as effective teachers. Our approach at UWS has therefore been rather different. While recognising the necessity and value of addressing the list of Government defined competences, we have sought to broaden that approach, developed a range of different assessment strategies that can be used by teachers and by university tutors to support key processes in student development. Our assessment and profiling procedures are specifically designed to establish a dialogue about practice: a dialogue between the university, the schools and the students. It is this dialogue that is helping to foster within schools, a culture of discussion and reflection about teaching and learning which in turn is helping to provide the foundation for students to develop as reflective practitioners. Assessment at UWS is therefore not

something that is imposed on students. While external Government criteria are met, the assessment framework we have developed is something that is helpful for teachers and tutors and, even more importantly, empowering for students in helping them take responsibility for their own further professional development.

Notes:

- ¹ The Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PACE) is the one year course of training for graduates as teachers. Currently in Britain, virtually all secondary school teachers enter the profession via this route.
- ² For a full review of this literature, see Furlong and Maenad (1995)
- ³ It is worth noting, in passing the importance of an area of competence which could be called Professional Qualities - as opposed to Professional Knowledge and Skills. These are not well represented in the government's list of competences. A forthcoming article will show how important these aspects are regarded by appointing committees.
- ⁴ The Office of Standards in Education (OPSTED) inspects all state school once every four years. The observation of lessons is the predominant source of evidence about the quality of education provided.

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