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Partnership within the Context of Mentoring Initial Teacher Education Students in Scotland: Progress or Maintaining the Status Quo?

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study concerns mentoring primary education student teachers within the context of Scottish Initial Teacher Education. With reference to partnership in ITE, it focuses on understandings about relationships between local authority and school, and between school and university within the mentoring process. Within an instrumental, collective case study research design, semi-structured interviews of mentors and student teachers were used to gather data alongside a constructivist grounded theory approach to analysis. Findings suggest that relationships are remote, in contrast with recent recommendations made by the previous and latest reviews of Scottish teacher education, and in the literature about effective ITE partnership. Conclusions provide examples of evolving enhanced partnerships and suggest the need for continued consideration of such developments to promote quality and consistency across ITE placement mentoring experiences.

KEYWORDS: *Partnership; Initial Teacher Education; mentoring; collaboration*

INTRODUCTION

Collaboration between key partners in teacher education has become a key feature of dominant understandings of 'quality' in this context and is a recurrent theme within the literature (for example, Furlong, McNamara, Campbell, Howson and Lewis 2008; Menter, Baumfield, Carroll, Dickson, Hulme, Lowden and Mallon 2011; Education Scotland 2015; Robson and Mitka 2017; Rauschenberger, Adams and Kennedy 2017). Similarly, lifelong learning has become a requisite capacity that supports today's knowledge society. Concomitant political, economic and social agendas have led to an increased emphasis on school improvement, where causality is directly connected between 'achievement' and 'quality teaching and learning' (Forde, McMahon, McPhee and Patrick 2006). Together, collaboration, accountability and commitment to lifelong learning are identified as key facets of such quality (Scottish Government 2011). These new emphases indicate that teachers need more complex knowledge, skill and competence bases than ever

before (for example, Field 2010; Scottish Government 2011). Therefore, the mentoring practices used to develop such quality require consideration.

This research study investigates understandings of mentoring primary student teachers within Initial Teacher Education (ITE) school placement contexts. With reference to partnership in ITE, this article focuses on understandings about relationships between local authority and school, and between school and university within the mentoring process. Underpinned by constructivist epistemology the research undertaken is investigative and interpretative in nature and concerned with processes that use detailed exploration of participants' understandings within their social and historical contexts (Littledyke and Huxford 1998; Jonassen 2006). This process involves the development of knowledge and understanding both independently and collaboratively. Contributions to knowledge are two-fold: the article contributes understandings of the complex nature of mentoring with reference to different parties involved in mentoring primary education student teachers with the context of ITE. Further, it offers alternative empirical insights into previous work about partnership between teacher education stakeholders such as studies undertaken by Williams and Soares (2000); Smith, Brisard and Menter (2006); Menter, Hulme, Elliot and Lewin (2010); McMahon, Forde and Dickson (2015); Aderibigbe, Colucci-Gray and Gray (2016). Scottish education policy is used to frame points made with those from international literature employed to inform discussions.

PARTNERSHIP IN INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

Mentoring beginner teachers is a complicated process (Harrison, Lawson and Wortley 2005; Heirdsfield, Walker, Walsh and Wilss 2008) requiring consideration of relationships, roles, needs and objectives, all impacted on by external and internal factors (Ambrosetti 2012). The term mentoring can have multiple meanings (Ambrosetti and Dekkers 2010). Coaching and mentoring are often employed interchangeably but they are different (Kemmis, Heikkinen, Fransson, Aspfors and Edwards-Groves 2014). For example, coaching can be interpreted as a process that promotes progression in team and individual performance of specific skills (Arnot and Sparrow 2004). Mentoring is indicative of a more experienced colleague supporting, challenging and facilitating the learning of another (Pollard 2005; Carnell MacDonald and Askew 2006). Arguably, coaching is involved in mentoring, and mentoring is part of coaching (Cordingley, Bell and Temperley 2005; Carnell *et al.* 2006). Further, mentoring can have variable meanings and forms linked to the cultural and structural contexts for learning in which it is situated (Carnell *et al.* 2006; Kemmis *et al.* 2014). Within a quality assurance environment, mentoring may be limited to a supervisory role of certain skills, which may entail prescriptive, directive behaviours (Rix and Gold 2000) that stifle collegiate dialogue, founded on traditional notions of the severance of particular groups (Sachs 2000) such as expert and novice teachers.

The transient nature of a knowledge society means that collaboration is desirable as it is problematic for individuals to keep abreast of requisite knowledge, understanding and skills (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder 2002). Collaboration between multiple stakeholders is acknowledged as significant and central to contemporary mentoring practices within teacher education (for example, Carnell

et al. 2006; EPPI 2008; Patrick, Elliot, Hulme and McPhee 2010; Aderibigbe, Colucci-Gray and Gray 2016) in its promotion of improvement in teaching and attention to social justice and equality through practices such as critical reflection, active trust, self-regulation, respect and reciprocity (Hargreaves 2000). With reference to school settings, if the culture is not one of collaboration then approaches to mentoring are unlikely to be collaborative (Williams and Prestage 2002) and educative where learning to be autonomous, collegiate and able to self-regulate is key (Iancu and Oplatka 2014). Within collaborative school cultures mentoring may be viewed as co-constructed through the use of a variety of mentors who differ in experience, values and practices (Tang 2012; Ulvik and Sunde 2013). This is necessary in view of acknowledging mentoring as a complex process and in building capacity to fulfil its requisite demands (*ibid.*). Further, mentoring may be perceived as co-constructed between mentors and mentees, akin to Mavrinnac's (2005) concept of 'mentoring up', rather than limited to traditional one-dimensional novice/expert perceptions. As such, beginner teachers foster the professional learning of their mentors through collaborative strategies such as collegiate planning, sharing ideas and offering feedback (*ibid.*). In this respect, mentoring may be viewed as a collaborative partnership between mentors and beginner teachers aimed at promoting reciprocal professional learning (Mackie 2020).

Collaboration within teacher education contexts is significant in fostering a 'quality' teaching profession within current framings of 'quality' education (Menter 2008). Such quality requires positive, dialogic collaboration between key partners in ITE. Within the Scottish context, the rhetoric on the importance of, and the need for, improved partnership is evident in the last three reviews of teacher education, stage one (Deloitte and Touche 2001), stage two (Scottish Executive 2005), and the latest report: 'Teaching Scotland's Future' (Scottish Government 2011). The stage one review suggests more formal partnership arrangements between teacher educator institutions, local authorities and schools in the form of 'Teacher Development Partnerships' be brought about (Deloitte and Touche 2001). This recommendation did not take place prior to the stage two review (Scottish Executive 2005). This review recommends that local authorities should be more involved in school placements in terms of organisation, mentoring and assessment, and that formal arrangements are put in place by local authorities to gauge the quality of these school placements (*ibid.*). Further, the review makes suggestions that partners engage in increased dialogue regarding the school placement to foster improved provision (*ibid.*). Overall, the recommendations suggest accountability for ITE should be shared between teacher education institutions and local authorities (*ibid.*). The latest review echoes such sentiments (Scottish Government 2011). In their 2009 report, Moran, Abbott and Clarke noted that formal partnership agreements were still deficient for reasons of lack of government resource allocation despite being recommended in a variety of reports and reviews such as the ones noted (McNally 2002). In this respect, issues of continuity between ITE and newly qualified teacher contexts are relevant. Continuity cannot be assumed given the challenging nature of transition from being a student teacher to a newly qualified one with more extensive responsibilities (*ibid.*). In Scotland the notion of teaching as a process of continual professional learning is recognised post-ITE through the induction year and subsequent

General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) professional update requirements, which have been instituted to foster quality teaching (Menter *et al.* 2010; Robson and Mitka 2017). The induction year was designed as a further year of teacher education involving schools, universities and local authorities to provide structured mentor support, which was to ensure continuity and progression in learning (McNally 2002; Robson and Mitka 2017). These elements support the argument that ITE is the foundation of a teachers' professional learning, but that this should be seen as part of a continuing process (Scottish Executive 2001; Anthony and Kane 2008; Menter *et al.* 2010).

The model of partnership proffered in the 1990s aims at avoiding repetition between the roles of teacher education institutions and schools in that they were complementary with an aim of fully collaborative partnerships (Furlong, Barton, Miles, Whiting and Whitty 2000). Such a relationship is where school placements promote contextualised knowledge and understanding whereas teacher educator institutions foster that which is more generalised (Smith *et al.* 2006). This type of relationship promotes different forms of knowledge and recognises that theory and practice both contribute to views on teaching (*ibid.*). In the current context of a knowledge society teachers have to cope with a variety of information from multiple sources, such as theoretical, practical and tacit knowledge; colleagues; policy documents; parents and pupils (Cain 2015). Therefore, the involvement of more than one party in teacher education is vital in that a variety of perspectives are significant in fostering quality (Hargreaves 2003). A traditional theory/practice duality is a common conception of university and school roles and responsibilities within ITE contexts (Zeichner 2010).

Moving forward from the notion of the complementarity, a collaborative partnership (Furlong *et al.* 2000) means schools and teacher educator institutions have a mutual comprehension of teacher education (Kirk 2000). This kind of partnership entails a variety of dimensions and is wider than just school placement (*ibid.*). It is equitable and reciprocal, not a one-sided relationship in that both school and university involvement is recognised as being advantageous. For example, schools can access research information from universities, be involved in action research, and universities can make research more relevant to practical contexts (*ibid.*). Teacher engagement with, and critical employment of, research may be promoted through such a partnership (Hargreaves 2003), which can assist in mentoring dialogue in terms of giving mentees access to a variety of kinds of professional knowledge (Furlong and Maynard 1995). This type of partnership necessitates a change in university and school roles in that they may be 'equal but different' (Mullen 2000), for example, a change in role for university mentor to a more formative one working with student teacher and school mentor regarding ways of mentoring effectively (Brisard, Menter and Smith 2006). Tensions can arise because of traditional notions of university tutors as being in positions of power over school-based practitioners due to espoused hierarchical conceptions of theory over practice (Stanulis and Russell 2000).

The most recent review of ITE, Teaching Scotland's Future (Scottish Government 2011), maintains that schools should be professional learning environments with the capacity to effectively mentor and assess beginner teachers employing a model of enhanced partnership between schools, universities and

local authorities. This echoes the sentiments of a more collaborative partnership and further notes conceptions of an enhanced one (*ibid.*). For example, it makes specific recommendations with regard to the use of 'hub' schools where university tutors and school staff work much more closely together to promote quality and consistency of placement experiences and to address the traditional theory/practice divide (*ibid.*). This model is based on the Professional Development School (PDS) practices in the United States and Australia (Menter *et al.* 2011) where instructional coaches in schools lead on the professional learning of qualified teachers and student teachers (Snow and Marshall, 2002). Indicative of a social constructivist view of learning (Vygotsky 1978), schools and universities work collaboratively on a regular basis in this model to observe and assess mentees (Snow and Marshall 2002) akin to a community of practice (Wenger *et al.* 2002) where personal and professional relationships are central (Menter *et al.* 2011). As in any mutual mentoring context, reciprocity is key for collaborative mentoring relationships in its acknowledgement that all are mentors and learners. This fosters equity among mentors and mentees (Stanulis and Russell 2000). If this is not evident managerialist conceptions of governance may result such those evident within the English National Partnership Project (Furlong *et al.* 2008) which exhibited complementarity in its form, despite rhetoric towards collaboration, in its over-simplistic technical rationalist approach resulting in conceptions of teacher training rather than teacher education involving a variety of stakeholders such as ITE providers, Local Education Authorities and schools (Furlong, Campbell, Howson, Lewis, McNamara 2006).

METHODOLOGY

In investigating understandings of mentoring primary education student teachers within Scottish school placement contexts, an instrumental, collective case study design was employed. It was instrumental in the sense that it investigated an overarching case, the process of mentoring primary student teachers, in order to understand the phenomenon of mentor and mentee understandings of mentoring. The collective element refers to a more holistic view of that phenomenon through the study of individual cases within a collective study (Stake 2005). Within the collective case of the mentoring process, four individual cases were explored: local authority mentors (LA mentors), school management mentors (SMT mentors), class teacher mentors (CT mentors), and student teachers (mentees). University tutors were not involved in the study as it focuses on mentoring within school placement experiences and the everyday reality of that mentoring process. Within the teacher education institution involved in this study, this process occurs substantively within school contexts on a daily basis. University tutors visit the student teacher once during the placement. This provides a glimpse of student progression in professional learning. Besides that, contact tends to be restricted therefore inadequate in developing a meaningful mentoring relationship with the mentee. In this respect, mentoring models based on democratic education practices aimed to reconstruct traditional hierarchical university/school structures, instead promoting dialogue and critical reflection (Fenimore-Smith 2004), are not employed in the process of mentoring the student teacher. Such 'teamed' models of mentoring entail consistent collaboration on a regular basis between class

teacher mentors, mentees and university tutors where dialogue based on observation and reflection is key (*ibid.*).

Sampling was purposeful in the recruitment of six year three undergraduate student primary teachers who had experienced mentoring on a previous placement so could employ experiences cultivated through this study to develop professional learning about the mentoring process, and to use this learning in their final year placement. The students ranged in age, from three 'typical' undergraduate students (early twenties) to three more 'mature' student (over thirty) who had returned to higher education from another career. These students volunteered to participate in the study and had been placed across two local authorities by the Student Placement System (SPS) managed by the GTCS and used by all ITE providers in Scotland.

The CT mentors of these students were recruited by way of email and phone conversations about the study and what it would entail. These particular mentors were recruited to construct six CT mentor/mentee mentoring pairs. This structure was designed to enable comparative analysis of responses where applicable. CT mentors were qualified primary class teachers from six Scottish primary schools which were situated in four urban and two rural areas within two local authorities. These schools were reasonable in size with at least one class at each stage. This meant student teachers could interact with a variety of staff members. All of the schools regularly mentor student teachers. Class teacher mentors were all primary class teachers ranging in age and experience, from those at the beginning of their career to only one year post-induction. The other four were at a variety of stages, from mid-career to nearing retirement. Two of the six were promoted members of staff, namely Principal Teachers. Three of the six were experiencing being a mentor for the first time, the other three had mentored many students in the course of their teaching careers.

School management level mentors were from the same schools as the CT mentors and were recruited by way of email and phone conversations about the study and what it would entail. They were experienced primary teachers who had worked in a variety of management level roles: four were Headteachers and two Depute Headteachers. All had a remit for mentoring student and induction year teachers in the school as part of their responsibilities. This entailed providing support for mentor teachers with regard to how to mentor effectively, carrying out observations of the mentee and offering feedback, and being an alternative mentor for the mentee to approach for advice. Local authority level mentors were located in the two local authorities where student participants had been placed through SPS and were recruited through email and phone conversations about the study and participant requirements. They were experienced teachers who had made a career move into local authority roles. They had responsibility for mentoring induction year and student teachers, in conjunction with school mentors, by way of carrying out observations, engaging in dialogue, addressing issues and contributing to summative assessments with reference to the GTCS competency standards, in addition to many other responsibilities. Data from the two local authority contexts was used to contextualise and help illuminate school-based mentor and mentee responses as well as gaining an alternative perspective on research questions.

Key ethical considerations for this study are informed consent, confidentiality, accuracy of reporting and positionality. With regard to accuracy of reporting, opportunities for bias require acknowledgement as objectivity when reporting may be compromised (Hancock and Algozzine 2006). 'Detached honesty' was used in this study by constantly questioning and challenging the research carried out (Gillham 2000). For example, dialogue with colleagues about the reasonableness of findings and associated interpretation was significant when coding data and in the abstraction of key themes. Findings were also subject to critical analysis by recognising that many interpretations may be evident through reading relevant literature and communications with participants. In respect of positionality, student teachers were from the researcher's own university programme therefore it was vital to acknowledge possible issues, for example, traditional dualities of power such as that between university tutor and student. This can bring about the 'interviewer effect' where interviewees respond in the way they think is expected rather than authentically (Denscombe 1998). Cognisant of such issues, mentees were informed that the researcher was in the role of a researcher rather than a university tutor. This communication, combined with the researcher having developed positive relationships with students, meant that they seemed to feel at ease and thus were able to offer open, honest responses. This was observable through their relaxed body language, and through laughter and sharing funny stories about teaching. It was further apparent by way of the content of their responses in that they were confident to be critical of mentors and prepared to offer opinions about ways in which the university and school could enhance school placement experiences.

To foster methodological congruence, constructivist approaches to data collection, analysis and interpretation were used (Thomas 2009). As such, these processes are perceived as active and shared with participants (Esterberg 2002). Semi-structured interviews were apposite in promoting the exploration of data within individual cases as well as comparative analysis of data across cases (*ibid.*). Each participant was interviewed individually. Student teacher interviews took place in the researcher's office at a suitable time for both parties. Other participants were interviewed at a time and place selected by them. Participants were asked a variety of questions about mentoring, such as who it involves, its forms, benefits, and the roles, characteristics and styles of mentors and mentees, based on a review of relevant literature. A strategy of probing questions was employed to further investigate participant understandings in order to foster depth of analysis (May 2001). For reasons of confidentiality when reporting, participants were accorded a pseudonym, for example, local authority mentor A - LAA, school management mentor A - SMTA, class teacher mentor A - CTA, student teacher A - STA.

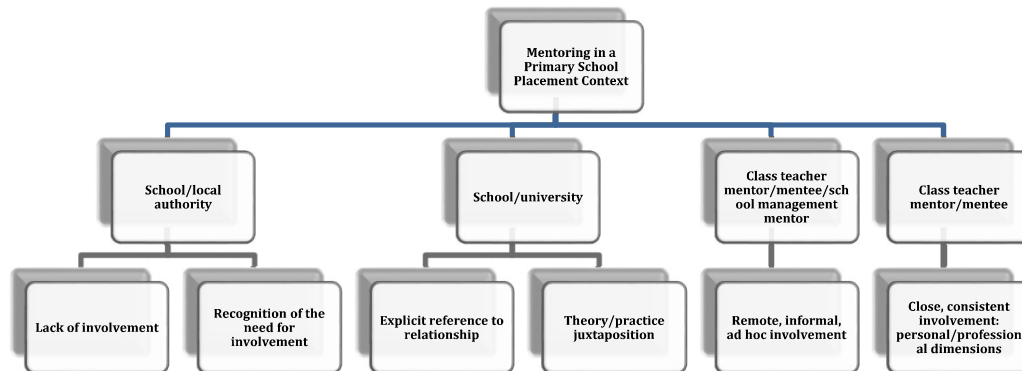
Constructivist grounded theory was used as an approach to analysis and theory development as it provides a detailed approach to coding where theories are constructed from the data (Charmaz 2006). Researchers are no longer 'silent' whilst objectively uncovering data using established theory, rather preferring to iteratively construct and reconstruct participants' understandings (Hallberg 2006) in order to gain a fuller picture of emerging interpretations. Initially, within case analysis is carried out to ascertain key themes and promote thick description of

individual cases in advance of cross-case analysis (Simons 2009). Three stages of coding were adopted for each case: initial, focused and theoretical. Initial coding entails detailed analysis by close reading of word, line and segments of data (Charmaz 2006). Focused coding was then employed to synthesise data by examining initial codes for commonality and difference. Commonality was ascertained to be a justifiable basis on which to construct focused codes and ensuing theoretical coding/themes. Initial codes apparent in over 50% (four out of six) of participant responses within each case were employed in focused coding while also attending to significant differences. A constant comparative approach was adopted requiring flexibility in coding. As such, initial coding was revisited during focused coding which meant new codes emerged and others were revised. Theoretical coding was then undertaken by examining connections between focused codes within each case. Subsequently, a cross-case analysis of the four cases was carried out to refine themes and sub-themes. Whilst collecting and analysing data research memos about evolving themes, absences and interesting points were logged in order to promote a more holistic perspective of data in conjunction with finer details from coding. In the context of this qualitative study, positivist notions of generalisation are considered redundant in favour of 'fuzzy' generalisations (Bassegy 1999). Here suggestions are made about the broader applicability of research findings in terms of their influence on policy and practice by way of discussion between relevant stakeholders (*ibid.*).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Within the context of school placements, the research revealed that participants understood mentoring as a multidimensional process encompassing a range of relationships that support student teacher learning. Four relationships, which differ in terms of their extent and form/function, became evident: local authority/school; school/university; school management mentor/class teacher mentor/mentee; class teacher mentor/mentee. Figure 1.1 (below) summarises the key themes around these four relationships with regard to how participants understand mentoring in terms of who it involves and the extent of this involvement. School management mentor/class teacher mentor/mentee and class teacher mentor/mentee relationships are explored in previous articles focused on micro-level within placement school relationships (Mackie, 2017; Mackie 2020). With reference to partnership in ITE, this article focuses on understandings about relationships between local authority and school, and between school and university within the mentoring process. The analysis showed that the relationship between local authorities and schools in the context of ITE is limited. The research highlighted that there appears to be a lack of consensus about whether local authorities should be involved with mentoring student teachers and, in reality, such involvement is not evident apart from in the induction year that follows undergraduate and postgraduate primary education programmes. The connection between school and university is similarly understood as remote with essentialist interpretations prevailing, such as universities being seen as responsible for theory and schools for practice.

FIGURE 1: MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN A PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACEMENT CONTEXT



LOCAL AUTHORITY/SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP

Two key findings emerged from the data in relation to the relationship between local authority and school: continuity between ITE and the following year of induction in respect of ITE being viewed as solely the responsibility of schools and universities, and the attention of LA mentors as focused on the post-ITE induction period. Data suggests that LA mentors viewed themselves as having more of a role with induction year teachers in the year proceeding ITE while those teachers worked towards the GTCS Standard for Full Registration (SFR). Despite the absence of involvement and guidance in mentoring student teachers, LA mentors felt they should be involved more given their remit for mentoring induction year and student teachers. Lack of time and having multiple remits were identified as key factors that prohibited such involvement. LAA noted the link between the two factors in that she had responsibility for curriculum development, co-ordination of induction year placements alongside involvement in mentoring inductees, student teacher placement allocation and providing mentoring support when required as well as organising those involved in taking the Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH) so time was very short. This meant that she had to prioritise things that needed more urgent attention.

...my remit is enormous...So it is a time issue...You kind of pick things up and you are running with them and if it is not broken, don't fix it. **LAA**

LAB maintained that she would like to be more involved with mentoring student teachers given her remit and the links to the post-ITE induction year but that resourcing prohibited it.

I think in an ideal world, yes. But I think the resource issue is very strongly mitigating against that at the moment. Even looking at my own post, I am the only CPD person in [name of authority], I have got probationers now in my remit, and mentors. I don't even have an admin assistant never mind a professional person to help me with that. In terms of taking on an overview or a closer interest in student mentoring, that is just not going to happen right now. **LAB**

LAA further maintained that Continual Professional Learning (CLPL) courses should be provided about mentoring for school teaching and management staff, as they are for other areas of professional learning, and that she would like to take part in dialogue so that expectations of mentors are clear even though she recognised that the SMT mentor should be engaging in such discussions. LAB noted the strategy of identifying a member of staff in a school cluster to address specific aspects of professional learning, such as mentor education, as a means by which to foster involvement of the local authority in CLPL.

We have got a new structure this year...but we are identifying people, one per cluster who will have a role in building professional learning capacity [about mentoring] within their cluster. **LAB**

This approach was used in a New Zealand mentoring programme where, in partnership with teacher education universities, a senior member of staff was selected to liaise with mentors and mentees in clusters of schools about mentoring (McCormack and Thomas 2003). Study findings indicate that quality of mentoring had begun to increase as a result (*ibid.*). Provision of mentor education for school mentors prior to a school placement experience is offered by some ITE providers (Aderibigbe, Colucci-Gray and Gray 2016; Aderibigbe, Gray and Colucci-Gray 2018). However, as reported in the latest review of partnership between local authorities and university ITE providers, mentor education in Scotland is mainly provided for post-ITE induction mentors who report positive effects of such input (Education Scotland 2015). Mentees interviewed for this review noted that mentors relied on their experience rather than having had formal education on mentoring (*ibid.*). A further significant consideration is that mentoring experiences are not solely the responsibility of mentors (Mackie 2017). Student teachers also need opportunities to learn about mentoring (mentee education) in order to engage more effectively with the mentoring process (*ibid.*).

The attention of LA mentors on their involvement in the mentoring of induction year teachers, as opposed to ITE student teachers, may be explained with reference to the quality assurance mechanisms employed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMIe) and the requirement of Scottish teachers to meet the SFR competency elements. The induction year focus is on progression from the Standard for Initial Teacher Education (SITE) requirements to meeting those for the SFR. It is a high stakes environment as failure means the ruination of a future teaching career. Given the importance of induction and the issues with resourcing identified in study findings, it may be reasonable to suggest that any time available to LA mentors was accorded to induction. The lack of attention accorded by HMIe quality assurance mechanisms to ITE may be a further factor. In England inspections are carried out for both schools and ITE providers by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) (EPPI 2008). They emphasize 'rigorous' quality assurance focusing on effectiveness and areas for improvement against statutory national frameworks (*ibid.*). In cases where organisations are judged to need improvement, a further inspection is carried out within one year. Schools in Scotland are subject to similar inspection procedures by HMIe. These inspections are focused on educational standards, quality and achievements. However, a less demanding system for those involved in ITE is

evident. All teacher education programmes must be accredited through the GTCS (GTCS 2016). However, unlike the English context, teacher education providers and partners are not inspected as such: HMle carry out 'Aspect Reviews' from time to time but these reviews are reported to have little impact on provision (Smith 2010). There is no requirement to meet suggestions for improvement or change. This has a potentially detrimental effect on quality and consistency within ITE, for example, with regard to mentoring and assessment practices. The latest review of ITE specifically addresses this area in its recommendation that quality assurance mechanisms for mentoring and assessing beginner teachers should be applied through GTCS accreditation procedures and HMle inspections to both schools and teacher education institutions (Scottish Government 2011).

With regard to continuity between ITE and induction, CT mentors and mentees made no mention of the local authority when talking about who was involved in mentoring the student teacher and the influence of agencies other than the placement school. SMTC was the only school management level mentor who commented on the local authority.

...ultimately the local authority should be involved because at the end of the day, they are looking for teachers to fill vacancies come the time when they have finished their course...at the moment there is not an awful lot of input from local authorities. **SMTC**

CT mentors, mentees and SMT mentors noted that there was no guidance provided by the local authority about mentoring student teachers. LAB remarked that mentor education could only be provided for those with a specific role in mentoring induction year teachers as there were no resources to fund anything further. LAA talked about schools using university documentation with regard to understanding expectations of student teachers on particular placements.

...the university tend to send out the thumbnail sketches to the schools and the expectations of them so I just leave it that the schools are going to pick it up from there...I am relying on the headteacher to pull that guidance off, realise what is required... **LAA**

Further, LA mentors saw support for student teachers as coming from schools. LAB viewed schools as being experienced in dealing with students so saw no particular role for herself in that context. LAA specifically noted that it was the school management's role to support the classroom teacher in the mentoring process and to develop their skills in that area.

I see that as the school's role with the support of a DHT or a principal teacher to support a classroom teacher and to develop their skills in perhaps mentoring a student...I would say that their role is very much to support the staff in their school. **LAA**

LA mentors also viewed school collegiate practice through SMT mentors leading professional dialogue within and across cluster schools as a mentoring resource. Additionally, they remarked that university support was essential, making particular reference to the university tutor visit. Comments were also made about universities extending opportunities for partnership with schools to discuss aspects

of school placement mentoring. LAB noted that it would be advisable to do this through certain partnerships as she saw it as impossible for universities to support every school in which a student teacher might be placed.

I suppose any one institution is working with students from I don't know how many local authorities. Probably several. Therefore, it may not be practical for you to come to the local authority but within university partnerships it may be possible to offer that...if you see the students' development as not just being the student but the student and their support in school, then you would want to support the whole of that interface I would have thought. **LAB**

Continuity between ITE and induction is an ongoing issue (Aderibigbe, Gray and Colucci-Gray 2018). It is evident from the data in respect of ITE being viewed by LA mentors as the responsibility of schools and universities. Continuity cannot be assumed given the challenging nature of transition from being a student teacher to a newly qualified teacher with more extensive responsibilities (McNally 2002). Given that LA mentors were not involved with mentoring student teachers, it could be suggested that continuity between ITE and induction is being compromised. In Scotland the induction year was designed as a further year of teacher education involving schools, universities and local authorities to provide structured mentoring support to foster continuity and progression in professional learning (*ibid.*). It is planned and regulated by local authorities, therefore it may be suggested that facilitating continuity from ITE and beyond is an important role for them to undertake (*ibid.*). In 2005 local authorities were reported to be examining the issue of continuity and working on producing policies to facilitate and inform it (HMIE 2005). In this study, no such policies or guidance were evident in the local authorities suggesting that progression in this area has stalled.

Further, the view of ITE as the responsibility of schools and universities appears to be in opposition to partnership recommendations made in the last few reviews of ITE. The latest review (Scottish Government 2011) echoes the recommendations of the previous one (Scottish Executive 2005) in its comments that local authorities should be more involved in school placements in terms of organisation, mentoring and assessment (*ibid.*). Similarly, formal partnership agreements in Northern Ireland are reported as deficient for reasons of lack of government resource allocation despite being recommended in a variety of reports and reviews akin to the ones noted previously (Moran, Abbott and Clarke 2009). It appears that progression in the area of promoting continuity between ITE and subsequent professional learning through partnership between schools, universities and local authorities continues to be an area that requires attention. It may be suggested that, given these parties are 'gatekeepers' to the profession in respect of their quality assurance role in teacher education and beyond, it is vital for them to work together to provide a consistent and coherent professional learning experience from the outset of a teaching career.

SCHOOL/UNIVERSITY RELATIONSHIP

Within the realms of partnership in ITE, the relationship between school and university emerged in addition to the local authority/school one. Findings from the data were indicative of an explicit recognition of the relationship between school

and university, and of a theory/practice juxtaposition. Explicit recognition is evident in responses about school involvement in mentoring and guidance provided about the process. CT mentors recognised the university and school connection in a variety of ways, for example, that the aim of both was for the mentee to make progress in the process of becoming a teacher. Responses also indicate that mentees could be interpreted as being learned from as well as being learners. CTB noted that student teachers brought new ideas from university settings while CTA acknowledged that they also had the opportunity to put university learning into practice. CTD remarked that further contact with the university could be made if there were issues with the mentee.

...we don't have an awful lot of partnership with the University but that's because if the student's doing fine and they're learning...we know you're doing your job and they know we're doing ours...I suppose there would be more contact if there...were problems... **CTD**

Mentees also recognised the university and school connection in their comments about it being the practical part of learning to teach. STD noted specifically that placement is where university learning begins to make sense. STE remarked that she valued the view of her CT mentor more than the university tutor as the CT mentor was actually doing the job.

I think there are some differences in the roles. But there's also quite similar, I see the University as very much theory based. Where when you're in placement I see it more as a practical and, I suppose, the teacher to give you more practical advice than the theoretical side...But, you know, somewhere along the line the two a' them's got to come together. Your tutor at Uni would need to be able to give you practical advice. And on placement your mentors should be able to give you...where it links to theory. **STE**

As in the case of CT mentors, SMT mentors acknowledged the university and school connection in a variety of ways, for example, within comments about the importance of working together to foster quality teachers. SMTA and SMTC noted specifically that the university's role was to prepare students for placement experiences. When on placement SMTD maintained that university tutors should listen to the feedback from the school mentors as they were spending the majority of time with the student teacher. The importance of the school was also evident in the comment by SMTE that the weighting of responsibility for mentoring was with the school and that the university was removed from daily teaching practices. She further remarked, as CTD, that increased contact with the university was only made if there were issues.

I think that we're very good at identifying which students can go a little bit further and which ones just need to continue doing what's the requirement rather than that little bit extra...I think that it has to be very clear that if we have any concerns very early doors I'm quite happy to pick up a phone and make contact...it is a partnership thing. But I do think that it's weighted on us. **SMTE**

Local authority mentors referred to the school/university relationship within the context of the university tutor visit. Based on her experiences of being a mentor in school contexts as a class teacher, LAA stated that normally this was a positive experience but could be fraught with tension if the school mentors and university tutor disagreed about the mentee's teaching capabilities.

The placement guidelines were also understood as part of the school/university relationship. CT mentors viewed them as the main source of guidance for mentoring the student teacher, CTA referred to them as her 'bible'. They noted that the guidelines were clear and helpful in setting out requirements of the mentee for the placement experience but commented that if further assistance with mentoring was required they would engage in professional dialogue with colleagues in school. Similarly, SMT mentors noted that the university guidance was the main source of information for mentoring the student teacher with SMTB and SMTC specifically commenting that the guidelines are 'followed'.

I mean it's totally all based on the documentation that we get from the University...So...that's the framework that they follow. **SMTB**

We usually just use the guidance that comes out from the institution. They provide quite detailed exemplar of what they expect the student to do over the length of the placement and basically the staff follow that. **SMTC**

Mentees noted that guidelines were of assistance in clearly setting out expectations of them. STA and STC made particular reference to the topics provided for the mid-placement review meeting between CT mentor and mentee as a mechanism for specific discussion rather than just focusing on things as they arose. STD suggested that it would be helpful for CT mentors to have guidelines focused on expectations of them as mentors, for example, in terms of consistent formative dialogue, as well as those detailing requirements for mentees. Mentees further remarked that a characteristic of an effective mentor was that they were familiar with university documents. STB stated that the anxiety she felt about what was expected of her on placements was made worse if mentors did not read the guidelines provided.

[Not reading the university guidelines]...That freaks me out. We have got this path, we know what we need to do and they haven't got any time to look at it. **STB**

Data suggests a theory/practice juxtaposition within the school/university relationship. Understandings of the roles of schools and universities were three-fold: as different, as both important in their own right, and as connected. CT mentors viewed the university as focused on theoretical aspects of learning to teach, as being a context in which to listen, take notes and discuss. They maintained that school placements were significant in putting that learning into practice in order to see different classes and experience the 'pitfalls' first hand. CTF further noted placement as an opportunity to find out what works for the mentee in practice and identify aspects they need to know more about.

...I think a distinction has to be made that when they are at university they are getting a lot of theorist based things and the chance then when they come out to actually put

it into practice, see what works for them, what doesn't work for them, what they thought they might have known but actually 'I haven't got a clue about this, I'll have to go back and revisit'. It is fine reading it in a book but...It has to be done actually hands on and in practice. **CTF**

This focus on gaining practical experience was seen by CT mentors as a benefit of mentoring for mentees in that they could gain hands on experience with a variety of learners in a realistic setting. CTB pointed out that as a student her school placements were of most benefit because children are all different.

I know myself many years ago as a teacher training the...most I ever learned was in the school...putting...the theory into practice was the most...beneficial side of teacher training... Because children...don't do anything by the book...And each class is totally different so they need experience...to be able to...teach any stage or size of class or type of children. **CTB**

Mentees also viewed university as focused on theoretical aspects of learning to teach, as providing the foundation on which to develop and practice teaching skills in school settings. STE further suggested that university tutors be able to talk about practice and that placement mentors be able to connect practice to theory. The opportunity to gain practical experience was identified by mentees as a key element. They stressed learning from mentors in terms of the knowledge and skills of curriculum and pedagogy they had built up over their years of teaching. In terms of theory/practice elements, STF further expressed that enacting theory was complex but practice made it easier.

...I was learning and developing the skills of a teacher...I think it is easy to read the theory and you think that you know all that is involved but when it comes to putting it into practice there is so much that you forget to do. The more you practice...it becomes like second nature and you don't have to think about it so much. **STF**

As with mentees, SMT mentors understood university settings as focused on the theory of learning to teach and school placements as contexts in which to enact such learning. SMTC articulated this as universities teaching what should be done and schools as giving mentees experience of what is actually done. She further noted that the two elements are needed to make a 'rounded' teacher.

I suppose [universities are] to prepare them as much as they can for coming in to schools. Giving them as much knowledge of what is current in education, education thinking, what are good skills and strategies that they need to develop. But the school role is to give them the experience of developing that. I think you need the two...that is very important...Because if we don't then...it can be either too academic and they don't have the experience, and I think you need both to make a rounded teacher. **SMTC**

As stated previously, understandings of the roles of schools and universities were three-fold: as different, as both important in their own right, and as connected. A perception of school and university roles as different emerged through an apparent traditional theory/practice duality in that the university role was articulated as being focused on theoretical aspects of learning to teach whereas school

placements were seen as contexts for learning about practice. This duality may be explored in terms of models of partnership between universities and schools. The rhetoric on the importance of, and the need for, partnership is evident in the last three reviews of teacher education (Deloitte and Touche 2001; Scottish Executive 2005; Scottish Government 2011). However, these relationships still tend to be led by universities (Menter *et al.* 2010). In this study the limited contact between university and schools, and the theory/practice duality may be indicative of partnership based on 'complementarity' (Furlong *et al.* 2000) where school placements promote contextualised knowledge and understanding and teacher educator institutions foster that which is more generalised (Smith *et al.* 2006). This type of partnership recognises that theory and practice both contribute to views on teaching (*ibid.*) and, it may be argued, is significant in the knowledge society where both theoretical and experiential evidence are important to foster learning (Hargreaves 2003). In this respect, the university context affords tutors greater access to a broad variety of teaching strategies than is probable for a teacher, enables them to engage with research and to elucidate and investigate teaching as a practice, whereas, practising teachers have greater access to knowledge that is contextual and so essential to teaching practice (Hagger and McIntyre 2006). However, such a division of responsibility contributes to the continuation of a theory/practice duality (Klieger and Oster-Levinz 2015).

Both university and school contexts for learning were also viewed as important in their own right. This finding is in alignment with previous literature reporting on perceptions of the roles of university and school placement learning (for example, Eraut 2003; Hagger and McIntyre 2006; Williams and Soares 2010; Allen and Wright 2014; Tang, Wong and Cheng 2015; Robson and Mitka, 2017). This is in opposition to studies where the practical element of teaching was more highly regarded (for example, Hobson 2003; Gleeson, O'Flaherty, Galvin and Hennessy 2015). In considering notions of power, according value to both contexts may be interpreted as an example of power as 'flux' (Foucault 1979). For example, schools can be viewed as both powerful and powerless. They may be powerless with regard to the view that the university guidelines are to be followed regarding the content and expectations of the placement experience, the university tutor visit to assess progress and, aside from that, contact being made only when there are issues with mentee progression. On the other hand, schools may be seen as powerful through findings that fostering practice is predominantly their responsibility and that practical input from school mentors is valued over that of the university tutor.

Universities are widely acknowledged in the literature as being the most effective settings in which to present relevant knowledge and understanding about learning and teaching practices and promote critical analysis (for example, Korthagen, Loughran and Russell 2006; Hagger and McIntyre 2006; Tang *et al.* 2015). Menter *et al.* (2010) identify this aspect as a particular strength of the Scottish ITE context, like the one in this study, through its consistent attention to the theoretical basis of education as a subject in its own right and to its associated disciplines as a basis for meaningful approaches to teacher professional learning. If such a foundation is not evident, beginner teachers may incline towards a simplistic approach to their learning that does not recognize the complex nature of

learning and teaching (Korthagen *et al.* 2006). It can be argued that this is an appropriate conception of the main focus of the university role given that the majority of university tutors, as in this study, are no longer practicing class teachers, therefore their capacity to take responsibility for practical elements may be restricted.

Recognition was also evident of the two contexts being connected in the view of university learning as preparation for teaching practice in school settings, and in terms of these settings affording mentees the opportunity to enact such learning. It can be argued that this kind of connection is useful in helping to circumvent the traditional theory/practice duality and thus foster ITE experiences, which evidence a holistic, joined up approach to mentee professional learning (Dewhurst and McMurtry 2006; Korthagen *et al.* 2006; Tang *et al.* 2015). Provision of quality mentoring is a central facet of such joined up experiences (Cheng, Tang, and Cheng 2012). In this respect, findings acknowledge the need for the two contexts to interlink in the view that university tutors and school mentors should be knowledgeable about both practice and theory (Robson and Mitka, 2017). Allen and Wright (2014) note the significance of both school and university staff in promoting theory and practice rather than treating them as individualistic elements. However, these kinds of connections can be challenging as they involve university and school settings working together to offer learning experiences, which are connected and foster analytical forms of learning, whilst recognizing that the social settings in which learning takes place are significant in their own right (Hagger and McIntyre 2006; Klieger and Oster-Levinz 2015; Tang *et al.* 2015).

The university involved in this study employs seconded practising class teachers from local authority primary and secondary schools to work with students and core university staff to facilitate links between theory and practice and to help develop more collaborative approaches to mentoring. Similar approaches are evident in Australia and Holland through the use of 'scholarly' teachers (Menter *et al.* 2010). These connections may be interpreted as a move towards a more 'collaborative' partnership (Furlong *et al.* 2000) where the relationship between schools and teacher educator institutions is more equitable and reciprocal with both school and university involvement being recognised as advantageous (Kirk 2000). This kind of partnership promotes a more comprehensive and consistent strategy for teacher professional learning (Menter *et al.* 2010) and is also in alignment with recommendations about enhanced partnership within the latest review of ITE, which include engagement in increased collaboration between school, university and local authorities regarding school placements to foster improved provision and to address the traditional theory/practice divide (Scottish Government 2011). In this respect, a collaborative partnership may be helpful in challenging the theory/practice divide by making clear the different and complex ways in which theory can be used such as translating theory into practice, where theory is used as a basis for practice, and practice into theory where theory follows practice, is used to deconstruct it and, in some cases, reconstruct it to form new theories (Hagger and McIntyre 2006). It may be argued that both conceptions are equally important (*ibid.*). School placement experiences may be enhanced through consideration of these different notions (Allen and Wright 2014) given that neither one on their own is a sufficient foundation for effective teaching and learning

(Furlong and Maynard 1995; Hagger and McIntyre 2006) if ITE is conceptualised as educative as opposed to a technicist view of training (Orland-Barack and Yinon 2007). This is particularly relevant for beginner teachers, like those in this study, whose initial knowledge and understanding of learning and teaching is most likely restricted to their own knowledge and beliefs (Smith and Hodson 2010). These constructed understandings are multifaceted and subjective, therefore, it is important to challenge them through both theoretical and practical elements of ITE programmes, acknowledging that these understandings and elements may accord or be in conflict with each other (Hagger and McIntyre 2006; Robson and Mitka, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The concept of collaboration as a significant feature between key partners dominates understandings of 'quality' teaching and learning in the context of ITE. With reference to partnership in ITE, this article focuses on understandings about relationships between local authority and school, and between school and university within the mentoring process. Data suggests that relationships between local authority and school, and between school and university are remote, suggesting that there is still work to be done to foster partnership of a more 'enhanced' nature as recommended in the most recent Scottish ITE review (Scottish Government 2011). Such notions of partnership may be viewed as beginning to emerge through strategies like the formation of the National Partnership Group (NPG) where formal agreements were made between university providers of ITE and local authorities with the aim of improving teacher professional learning (Scottish Government 2013). Its principles include quality of student learning experience; clarity of roles; a reciprocal relationship with regard to benefits for schools, universities and local authorities; maintenance of academic standards; adherence to the GTCS professional standards, continuity between ITE and induction; collaborative engagement of stakeholders; shared responsibility for assessment of student and induction teachers; support for those involved in mentoring; clear and consistent documentation about partnership arrangements (*ibid.*). However, consistency of movement towards this conception of partnership is disparate. There is some evidence of improvement in partnership by way of particular universities working with schools and local authorities around the area of mentoring in general, for example, the University of Stirling undertook a funded project with a variety of school and local authority staff from Perth and Kinross Council to develop online resources to support mentoring practices (Watson and Fox 2013). Arrangements more focused within ITE provision are also emerging such as the forging of closer partnerships between Aberdeen University and its partner local authority and schools spanning ITE to induction and beyond (Robson and Mitka 2017), and the University of Glasgow's use of 'hub' schools where university tutors and school staff work more closely together to promote quality and consistency of placement experiences (Menter *et al.* 2011). However, as a whole, these examples and the data from this study suggest that continued consideration of, and attention to, the development of such partnerships is required to promote quality and consistency across ITE placement mentoring experiences.

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