Student-teacher Stories

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FLiTE resources: Student-teachers' stories

Here are 9 stories that student-teachers shared about linking theory and practice. We can explore the stories to see what or who has helped them to link theory and practice, and what barriers they have faced.

We can look at the stories on our own, as professionals, and see what learning there is for us and our practice. We can also explore these stories together as professionals working in partnerships, to see what learning there is for us together, and how we might be able to move our practice forward to better support student-teachers in the task of connecting theory and practice.

Each story has some activities that you can use individually or in a workshop with other teacher educators in your partnership. We recommend you work together as groups of teacher mentors and centre-based teacher educators. Working in this way can help you to develop understanding across the partnership and gain new perspectives and insights that can move your thinking forward.

These research-informed resources were produced as part of a project funded by the [International Professional Development Association](#).

We hope you find them helpful. We would love to hear your feedback.

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Read through this story and see what you notice in this student-teacher's story.

My year 8 nightmare!

The issue:

One of my year 8 classes became quite difficult. They proceeded from chatting off task to rudely answering back and disrupting the lesson. Five pupils became so disruptive that I had to stop teaching and deal with them regularly. I had been using the school behaviour system and giving behaviour points, but that hadn't been effective. The regular teacher of the class observed these lessons and stated that I had not made progress and that the reason they were acting in this manner was because I had allowed them to. I felt fed up, and frustrated. What should I do?

What happened?

I spoke with my teacher mentor, and I decided that I would adjust my behaviour management style to be more like that of my year 8 observing teacher. I became quite strict and was raising my voice a lot more. This didn't sit well with me because I prefer to foster positive relationships with the pupils.

I requested a meeting with my professional mentor and my teacher mentor, and explained how this wasn't working for me, and that I did not feel comfortable behaving like this.

As a result, the teacher mentor scheduled a lesson observation for me with a physics teacher who has a calm behaviour management technique that I can relate to. I found this very useful and could see some different approaches that felt more like a style I could adopt.

I also asked to observe the year 8 teacher with this same class, to see her own behaviour management strategies. Unfortunately, that didn't happen, because of her absences.

What was learnt?

I have readjusted my teaching style to be more positive, and I have put into practice some of the techniques that I observed in the physics lesson, for example, positioning myself alongside pupils who are being challenging and talking to them quietly but firmly. I feel that these approaches are working in most of my classes except my year 8 class, which I still find challenging. However, my teacher mentor assures me that the children I struggle with are the same children that all the other teachers struggle with, and we are working together to find the best way to address this issue.

Perspective taking

- 1. What do you see as the issue or issues?

- 2. As a centre-based teacher educator, can you see a role for you regarding this situation? What would you advise this student-teacher if she asked you what she should do about the issue, after a session? Can you help her to link theory and practice for dealing with behaviour management? Are there resources that you could direct her to?

- 3. As a teacher mentor, what do you think you would have suggested or done about this issue? Can you help this student-teacher to link theory and practice for dealing with behaviour management? Are there resources that you could direct her to?

- 4. As a partnership, does this story raise any useful learning opportunities regarding collaboration?

- 5. From the student-teacher's perspective – what learning is there to take from this situation regarding:

    - a. behaviour management.
    - b. finding appropriate support for school-based issues.
    - c. linking theory and practice.

Taking it further: linking theory and practice around behaviour management

- 1. Recent research in Scottish schools has revealed that a range of behaviour management strategies are employed, most being restorative, nurturing and solution focused. Proactive approaches that are longer term and prevention focused are considered to be most effective. This paper might be shared with your student-teachers for discussion around effective practices in their context.
Mouroutsou, S. (2020) 'Beyond Disruption: identifying effective behaviour support in schools', British Academy/Leverhulme Report pp. 1–8.

- 2. Pupils need to develop an awareness of their own behaviours and be responsible for themselves and considerate of the rights of others. This underpins the creation of a positive and effective teaching and learning environment. The inclusive model of behaviour management and discipline designed by Bill Rogers is helpfully expanded to provide accessible guidance for student-teachers to develop their behaviour management approaches. The model covers minimising and preventing poor behaviour, encouraging good behaviour by correcting and negotiable and non-negotiable consequences.
Rogers, B. (2020) 'An introduction to an inclusive framework model for behaviour leadership, management and discipline', RicercAzione 12(2), pp. 239–253.

Read through this story and see what you notice in this student-teacher's story.

Adapting practice

The issue:

I was beginning my sequence of lessons for the third term in mathematics. I had been away from my year 2 class for 10 weeks and a lot had changed in a short time. Whilst I was away my teacher mentor said she had started using two higher-attaining girls to help two lower-attaining boys with their learning at points throughout the day. My teacher mentor said she had used this approach when she thought it was needed as she was sometimes alone in the class without an additional adult whilst I was on my second school placement. A new child with English as an additional language had also just joined the class.

I went to a Professional Learning and Development session that week prior to starting my sequence of lessons. During the session we learnt about several scenarios involving an autistic child and how the teacher had used peer support in class. The child liked to sit next to a particular girl all day. At first it appeared that he was learning and progressing but it later became apparent that he was copying the girl and had become reliant on her.

This gave me the idea to use two higher-attaining girls to support the two lower-attaining boys during the talk task but not for the independent task. I thought they should sit in their maths attainment groups for this task so the boys do not become reliant on the support and are able to do their work independently.

What happened?

Upon trialling this method, it seemed to work. It enabled the lower-attaining boys to learn the basic concepts during talk tasks before they did the independent task. They were able to understand the independent task much better and it freed me up as I was in the class without an additional adult. It also allowed me to support other children in the class including the new child with English as an additional language. Both lower-attaining boys are different in their strengths and I was concerned that maybe they were copying each other but on questioning them individually they were both able to give me the correct answers.

I discussed what I had done with my teacher mentor at our weekly mentor meeting and she thought it was great as it enabled me to support the rest of the class so that everyone could make progress. She has therefore given me control of maths planning and delivery for the remainder of the term in both year 2 classes. We have had another child join us who has English as an additional language. Using this approach has given me greater ability to help the new children and sometimes I use another higher attaining peer to support them, in a similar way.

What was learnt?

If it wasn't for the Professional Learning and Development session, I would not have thought of using this structured approach when I did. I may have got there in the end but the learning from this session opened my eyes before I started my sequence of lessons and made my lessons much more seamless from the start. I will use this same approach in my new school setting as I start my career as an early career teacher.

Connecting learning across institutional boundaries

This is a story to celebrate, where the student-teacher used her learning in the Professional Learning and Development session to adapt her classroom practice. This seemed fortuitous timing and happened largely through the proactivity of the student-teacher.

- 1. How could you enable more such connections to be made – as a mentor? as a centre-based teacher educator? as a partnership?

- 2. Are there things we can learn from this story about:
    - a. timing and relevance of centre-based sessions?
    - b. student-teacher motivation and engagement?
    - c. school-based opportunities?

- 3. How do we surface where such connections have been made? How can we disseminate this student-teacher's learning to others?

Taking it further: thinking about affordance

The invitational quality (or affordance) of the school is enabled by seeing student-teachers as colleagues, allowing student-teachers opportunities to engage in all teaching activities and having a clear policy for the education of student-teachers. There are four different types of activities that can be made available to student-teachers in school:

1. Pupil-level activities (with or for pupils) e.g. planning, teaching and marking
2. School-level activities e.g. communicating with colleagues, other professionals, parents and carers
3. Access to school-based resources e.g. pupil information, school data, teaching resources
4. Professional learning and development opportunities e.g. staff training and development

Of these, Timmermans (2012) showed that student-teachers were most likely to have access to pupil-level activities and school-based resources; not all activities were available or allowed at each stage of the student-teacher's development; and provision was not related to the learning needs of individual student-teachers. The affordance of partnership schools was often based on the individual decisions of mentors instead of on shared views regarding initial teacher education or the rhythm of the work itself.

- What learning opportunities are available to your student-teachers in partnership schools?

- What are the barriers to accessing learning opportunities that your student-teachers experience?

Timmermans, M. (2012) Kwaliteit van de opleidingsschool. Over affordance, agency en competentieontwikkeling [Quality of the opleidingsschool. On affordance, agency and competence development]. Tilburg University, the Netherlands. https://research.tilburguniversity.edu/en/publications/kwaliteit-van-de-opleidingsschool-over-affordance-agency-en-compe

Read through this story and see what you notice in this student-teacher's story.

Learning in different settings

Part 1: The issue:

I completed my second placement at a school in which I was teaching in a different key stage from the one I was working in at my home school. I was afforded the experience of working with an experienced teacher, with well delivered literacy lessons, who allowed me to first observe, then team teach and then deliver. To further add to this, I was able to observe how literacy was delivered for all year groups and to see the transition and differences between each year.

On arrival back at my home school, I was asked to plan the next unit of literacy for year 1 and to take ownership of the unit. I am very much the type of teacher that if asked to do and plan something I will get to work straight away. I planned the unit using my learning from the other school placement but was then told that I was no longer required to do the planning. The year 1 teacher whose classes I was teaching was not happy with my changes to the unit, and it caused some friction. It was a bit frustrating but I remained professional and got on with what I was asked to do.

I knew I had the correct intentions for the pupils but did not want to appear unprofessional. I explained the reasoning behind my proposed changes to the unit in open discussion with experienced teachers. I had a slight concern throughout the year as it felt as though the literacy was planned and delivered for lower attaining pupils only. It was something I felt uncomfortable with as the higher attaining pupils within the class were not being extended. I thought this in effect caused issues with low-level disruptive behaviour in the classroom.

What would you do?

- Discuss together.

   1. What is the problem? What is your impression? What are your first thoughts?

   2. Identify with the student-teacher. What would you do in their shoes?

   At this point the story does not mention any of the teacher educators in this partnership.

   3. What solution would you offer? Who would need to be involved?

- Now read the second part of the story.

Part 2: What happened?

At the end of the Easter term there were some major changes to teaching staff, and I was asked by the Head to become the year 1 teacher for the remainder of the year. In discussion with the other teacher in year 1, we began adapting the unit to better prepare pupils for the transition into year 2. We planned for two learning points per lesson with a focus on handwriting too.

The lessons were going very well. Pupils' writing capabilities were much improved as was their handwriting; they were writing paragraphs as opposed to only a few words. Other staff members commented on the new format and the improvements being made by pupils.

What was learnt?

I think from this experience I have learnt the importance of always remaining professional, explaining your reasoning but also not being 'precious'. Sometimes you must let things go and move on. Learn and have professional conversations and make observations with other teachers. Watch good practice. Learn from it and when you go into your first year of teaching, use your observations of different practice and make your class your own, using those experiences to be the best teacher you can be.

Compare your solution with what happened.
- What are the similarities?
- What are the differences?
- Would the strategy used here be a strategy you could use too?

How could the centre-based teacher educator contribute to the student-teacher's learning relating to the friction they felt regarding behaving professionally towards another member of staff and doing the best for the pupils?

Professional dilemmas in initial teacher education

We experience many incidents that provide opportunities for personal and professional development. Being able to identify these incidents in the moment and then stepping back and considering the bigger picture and what can be learnt through them is an important part of our own professional learning.

Take time together to identify some recent incidents that you or your student-teacher have experienced. For each one ask:
- What additional learning is there in this incident that will help this student-teacher to develop their professional attitude and behaviour further?
- Can I use this incident to explicitly model professional attitudes and behaviour for my student-teacher?

You may find useful: FLiTE Teacher Educator stories 4 & 8 about issues around student-teachers' professionalism.

The issue:

At the beginning of my 3-year undergraduate primary education course there were lectures and seminars designed to strengthen curriculum understanding and pedagogy, with an emphasis on learning from educational theorists. Lots of my peers had prior experience with child development whereas this was my first experience. I also did not have much school experience. The heavily theorised learning at university lasted approximately two months and I felt it was irrelevant and going over my head. I questioned if I had chosen the wrong course and if teaching was even for me.

What happened?

I started an 8-week placement. By the end of the placement I was teaching up to 25 percent of the timetable. It wasn't until I had this experience in school that I started to relate to the theory that I had been learning at university. This enabled me to come back to university with specific questions and scenarios etc. to use to help me develop further as a teacher.

At university there was an emphasis on different ways of learning, and I was able to develop and understand that I relate and learn in ways that are more visual, active and provide memorable learning experiences. I also thrive when using constructive pedagogical approaches – constructing my own learning and building my pedagogy through first-hand experiences (for example, going to university with a specific behaviour management scenario from placement and working with university lecturers and peers to find suitable responses). My learning was becoming more relevant and having the theory running simultaneously alongside the practice allowed my learning to click into place and I felt I was on the correct course and was passionate about teaching. I was actively reflecting on my learning and was able to identify my strengths and areas for development. This is something I have been encouraging pupils to do, and I have noticed higher levels of engagement as they have an increased attachment to their learning and attainment.

What was learnt?

By reflecting on myself as a learner, I feel I have a greater understanding of how to relate to children and support them so they don't feel overwhelmed like I did. I was able to understand and recognise that all pupils are unique and therefore learn at different rates, in different ways and with different understanding. This awareness has led to me developing my classroom practice to enable different ways of learning, catering to the specific needs of individual pupils.

As an adult I respond better to lessons that I find engaging, so if I'm not engaged when teaching a lesson then most likely the pupils will not be engaged when learning in the lesson. Not all lessons can be exciting and memorable, but I believe it is crucial for us as teachers to develop engaging practice as much as possible. If a lecture, a seminar or even a staff meeting is not engaging then regardless of whether we are an adult, child, teacher etc. it is less likely to support our learning.

Give this story a title

- 1. What title would you give this story? Compare your title with the title that others in your group have chosen. What issues have arisen in the story leading to your title?

- 2. The title the student-teacher gave the story was 'Never be an end-product' because they realised the importance of continually learning. Highlight keywords in the story that reveal other underlying beliefs and values of the student-teacher.

- 3. In teacher identity development it can be helpful to be able to recognise the values and beliefs you are holding. In what ways can mentors and tutors support this process?

- 4. This student-teacher mentioned a time when they would have given up on the course they were on. What can we learn that could help student-teacher retention, as:

   a.   A teacher mentor?

   b.   A university tutor or centre-based instructor?

   c.   A partnership?

Taking it further: developing an identity as a teacher

Korthagen (2004:79) describes an 'onion model' for the different interacting levels influencing teacher change in his discussion about a more holistic approach to teacher education (see table below).

Level	Description	
environment	The students and the school	Outer levels – can be observed by others
behaviour	Actions	
competencies	Knowledge, skills and attitudes	Inner levels – within the teacher
beliefs	Beliefs about learning and teaching which impact behaviour and competencies	
identity	Beliefs about self, as a teacher	Core qualities of the teacher
mission	Purpose or motivation for teaching	

He suggests that there is a need for congruence between these levels, to avoid inner tensions in the teacher, and outward problems in the classroom. Reflect on where and how you address each of these levels of teacher development in your teacher education curriculum.

- Which levels get least attention?

- How could you address this?

Additionally, Korthagen (2004:91) describes three examples of addressing identity and mission through 'core reflection'. For example, becoming aware of an inner tension between an ideal and constraining beliefs and feelings, may clarify the root of many of the problems the student-teacher is facing.

Korthagen, F. A. J. (2004). In search of the essence of a good teacher: towards a more holistic approach in teacher education. Teaching and Teacher Education, 20, 77–97.

Read through this story and see what you notice in this student-teacher's story.

The issue:

Having done my Master's degree in India, I was completely unaware of how the assignments work in Education here in England, especially for the PGCE. I have traditionally done exams and always passed with flying colours. Our first formative assessment for the PGCE was about defining a pedagogy and how we implement it in the classroom. Very confidently, I started writing the assignment and read through books, websites, and journals. Once finished, I submitted it and felt pleased with my efforts not knowing that my way of presenting the literature was not what is expected of me. When the feedback came through, I was reading it in disbelief as the suggestions were not something I expected. I had not been successful in doing enough research, went outside of the context, and had not used Harvard Referencing. For a person who has always been among the top few students it was difficult for me to digest the feedback and I lost hope.

What happened?

However, I gathered myself together and spoke to my professional mentor, teacher mentor, and subject tutor. All of them gave similar feedback which shows how the university and school operate in sync for our benefit. Once I had feedback and everyone showed me examples of how to present the literature, I felt more confident and I started reading and researching more. Our first summative assignment was on creating a single resource sheet for a key stage. By this time, I was already practising the pedagogy in my classroom and adapting my teaching more confidently. Based on the common feedback from the university and school, I had already started consolidating resources to reference from books, articles, journals, and online platforms. The assignment started to look structured and made more sense. I was in constant touch with staff at the university with any questions that I had, or any doubts. By the time I finished the assignment I had a clear understanding of the framework and referencing. This would have been impossible without the support of colleagues, fellow students, and university tutors. The feedback and marks this time were reassuring and boosted my confidence.

What was learnt?

I realised that a similar strategy can be used in the classroom also. I was teaching year 8's HTML and we aimed to create a webpage. I used the school resources to teach them for the first two lessons. When I asked them questions for an informal assessment, I realised that they had not developed enough knowledge to create a basic webpage. I discussed this with my teacher mentor and suggested that the students needed one lesson to revisit and recap the basics as I was not happy letting them struggle. It was agreed that I could use a single lesson to recap. I created a consolidated resource with a reference to the websites being used. I modelled syntax on the board and each student had to make sure they worked on it and sent me screenshots of their work. This enabled me to show that my strategy had worked.

The structure of the course is planned in such a way that it enables me to get ample opportunity to act on feedback, change what does not work, and implement the revised practice in my classroom. In the last year, I have emerged as a better practitioner with strong subject knowledge, and as a confident writer. I have also become more resilient.

Working in partnership

The student-teacher noted that 'the university and school operate in sync'. This is an example of good partnership practice, experienced by the student-teacher, around supporting the writing of assignments.

- 1. As a centre-based teacher educator, are there areas of practice which you think would benefit from being shared more across the partnership?

- 2. As a school-based mentor, are there areas of practice which you think would benefit from being shared more across the partnership?

- 3. What would be the benefits of each of these suggestions? How could you advance these ideas into practice?

Taking it further: The purpose of your partnership

As a partnership you know what you do, and to some extent you know how you do it, but have you spent time considering why you do what you do?
See the 18 minute video by Simon Sinek: The Golden Circle.

- Why does your partnership do what it does, in the way it does it?
- What are your underlying values and beliefs?
- What is your vision for the kind of teachers you want to grow in your partnership?
- What characteristics are you seeking to develop?

Our Partnership Vision

How to develop a shared partnership vision of your purpose

- Invite contributions from all the participants in the partnership who want to contribute.
- Pull contributions together into something that people can review and comment on.
- Work on a final version that everyone feels enthusiastic about.
- Match up the different ways of expressing your vision. This will involve important relationship work and compromise that can set the foundation for a strong partnership.
- Launch your partnership vision in a significant way and make sure that all participants are aware of the launch.
- Constantly work to raise the vision as part of everything you do – mentor development, partnership meetings, teaching students, assessment. This is your underlying purpose and you need everyone to genuinely embrace it.
- In times of change come back to the partnership vision as an anchor to help you as you may need to let go of structures that have worked well and been refined over many years, and keep on asking what is the best way to meet the purpose of our partnership?

Read through this story and see what you notice in this student-teacher's story.

It is not what it looks like!

The issue:

When I started my first placement I was teaching a sequence of lessons to a year 9 class. The class was lovely and worked well with me and with my mentor. I left my first placement around December and went on to a second placement.

After six weeks, I came back to my first placement and started picking up classes again. I was truly disappointed to see that a student who had always been kind and respectful and had done his homework and cared about learning had become completely the opposite. He was rude with his peers and disrespectful to me and my mentor. I had no choice but to follow the school procedure and firmly sanction his actions. He was given detentions and after school detentions but clearly it had no impact whatsoever.

I remember making phone calls to his parents and it was the father that always answered the phone. On many occasions he was apologetic and promised to have a word with his child.

One day, both parents turned up to school as they had a meeting with the Headteacher because their child was involved in a serious incident that could have resulted in him being excluded from school. The parents disclosed that a divorce was taking place and the child was distressed and angry and displayed explosive behaviours.

What happened?

This situation caused me to reflect on the centre-based professional learning and development sessions. I asked for specific behaviour management theories and books to read and wanted to attempt some new strategies. One of the books helped me to understand that there is always a reason for a child to misbehave. At times, a family situation can tip the scale and there is no guarantee that the child will disclose anything. Therefore, it is vital for me to know my classes and spot any extreme change in a pupil's behaviour.

As a school we adapted our approach and I personally had to find common ground to work with this student. Luckily, we support the same football team and I used this as a basis for building a relationship with him and supporting his emotional needs. I managed to gain his trust and convinced him to attend catch-up sessions so that he was in line with other classes. He did not attend all of the sessions, but he made a positive decision and attended a few.

What was learnt?

I learnt the importance of communication between the school and parents. It was clear to me that as a teacher, I have a responsibility to care for my students' wellbeing and play a part in their emotional stability. As a teacher, I learned that I must be proactive in my teaching and be able to adapt my teaching to best stimulate students' minds. In fact, the centre-based sessions helped me to adapt my teaching and to understand that adaptive practice is about reaching out to a wide range of students and having a positive impact.

This situation has taught me to be mindful of sudden changes in behaviour and to always work with parents, colleagues, pastoral staff and the school SENCO to best support pupils.

Appreciative inquiry

Discover: what went well in this story?

who was involved in the story?

Dream: what could have made this even better for the student-teacher's learning?

how would you have liked the centre-based teacher educators and the school-based teacher mentor and professional mentor to have contributed?

Design: what practical steps could you take towards achieving that dream?

make an action plan.

Deliver: put your action plan into effect.

Taking it further

Change is a daunting prospect for many, and changing the way we work in partnerships is a challenge. A major issue in enabling change to take place is that people can feel uninvolved in the actual change process and become unengaged. The focus can tend towards what is not working well, and how we can fix problems. Appreciative inquiry (www.davidcooperrider.com/ai-process/) is an alternative approach which is solution-focused and was founded by David Cooperrider. It starts from success stories and draws out the good and ignores the problems, which feels counter-cultural, but can have substantial impact. The recommendation is that you bring together a school- and a centre-based team to work through the steps to enable positive changes to the way you are working in your partnership.

Appreciative inquiry comprises of four steps: discovery, dream, design and destiny. In discovering, you are looking for what gives life here, appreciating the best of what is already happening. The dream of what might be is envisioning the results and impact you would like to see. The design involves co-construction of what should be ideally, and designing an action plan; and the destiny or delivery involves implementing the action plan and sustaining the positive change.

For an example of using appreciative inquiry in practice see:

Chapman, L. (2014) What pedagogical approach is needed in school-led training to develop outstanding teachers? In Jones, K., & White, E. (Eds.), Developing outstanding practice in school- based teacher education (pp.40-46). Critical Publishing.

Read through this story and see what you notice in this student-teacher's story.

I wasn't ready!

The issue:

When I started the centre-based sessions we had a session on learning theories quite near the beginning of the course. I couldn't see the point of it. It did not seem relevant to my practice. I just wanted to know what I needed to do to cope with the behaviour issues that were occurring in my classes. I felt overwhelmed with finding my feet in a school, getting on with the teachers and the pupils, knowing where to find the things I needed and what I had to do for the course. It was much harder than I expected to get the class to pay attention and to do the things they needed to do.

What happened?

When I went to my second school, I felt much more settled, I found my feet more quickly and felt more settled in the profession. At this point I felt I could relate to the theories that we had learnt about in that early session. They helped me to understand better how children learn so they became relevant to me. I was able to discuss some of the ideas with the mentor and use them in the way I planned the lessons.

What was learnt?

In the end I suppose I just wasn't ready for learning theories so soon, as I had not had much experience in school and I struggled to feel settled enough to think about theories! I did grow more settled and confident through my time in the first school, but I felt I grew more quickly in the new school community. I became much more interested in the pupils and their learning, rather than how I could get all the right things done and manage the tasks and the pupils during the lessons.

Empowering student-teachers

1. What are the challenges here for the student-teacher?
2. Is there empowerment? Is there a growth in self-confidence?

The student-teacher does not mention the role of any of the teacher educators from school or the centre, either in her induction into the school environment or regarding connections between centre-based sessions and school experience, and vice versa.

3. In what ways could the teacher mentor help in the first school?
4. In what ways could the centre-based teacher educator help?
5. Have you any other suggestions that might help to empower the student-teacher?

Consider what you have learnt from the story and the activity. Share this with the group.

Taking it further - The purpose of theory

Theories are useful practical tools. Like keys, they can unlock what is going on in practice and help you gain new perspectives on complex situations. Boyd (2014) explains how learning as professionals involves engaging with the interplay between public knowledge (theory) around our field and the experience or 'wisdom' that comes from our practice.

- How could you help a student-teacher to understand the purpose and benefits of theories?

Boyd, P. (2014). Using "modelling" to improve the coherence of initial teacher education. In P. Boyd, A. Szplit, & Z. Zbróg (Eds.), Teacher educators and teachers as learners: international perspectives (pp. 51–73). Wydawnictwo Libron.

Taking it further – teacher development

The student-teacher recognised that she was growing more quickly in the school community in the second school than she had in the first school. At the beginning of her course, she was more interested in herself and what she was doing and the tasks in the classroom. Later on she became more interested in the needs of the pupils and their learning. This is a recognised professional trajectory for teacher development, which is captured in this video on Developmental Mentoring for initial teacher education (www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftn-2PExAvw).

- Who would benefit from exploring this theory? Where could you introduce them to these ideas?

Read through this story and see what you notice in this student-teacher's story.

Part 1: The issue:

Near the beginning of my school-based experience I was preparing long PowerPoint slideshows with lots of details of all the things that I wanted the pupils to learn in my lessons. I was anxious to make sure I didn't forget anything, and I often ran out of time during the lesson. My mentor pointed out to me that the pace of my teaching was not keeping the pupils engaged. However, I was perplexed about what I could do.

What would you do?

Discuss together.

1. What is the problem? What is your impression? What are your first thoughts?

2. Identify with the student-teacher. What would you do in their shoes?

3. What support could you give as the school-based mentor?

4. What support could you give as the centre-based teacher educator?

Now read the second part of the story.

Part 2: What happened?

I went to the centre-based session that week which introduced me to the concept of cognitive science. I thought this was very useful, as the session included ideas that we could put into practice straight away based on this theory. I was able to see what I could do to improve my slides and hopefully to help with the pace of my lesson and the engagement of the pupils. I went through the slides that I had prepared for my next lesson and made them much simpler and I cut down the number of slides. I wrote myself key notes so that the lesson was more purposeful. I was excited to see the impact of these changes on my class. When my mentor observed the lesson, she noticed that the slides were clearer and easier to follow and that the pupils were more engaged. I still didn't get the ending right – as I had still prepared too much material. Later I reflected on the lesson and I was really impressed at the impact putting that theory into practice had on my teaching.

What was learnt?

I think this incident near the beginning of my course helped me to value the centre-based sessions and to try to take something away each week that I could put directly into practice to see if the ideas would work for me. I suppose I was more attentive and tried to make a mental note when there were ideas that were attractive to me but weren't directly relevant to the coming week. I found it very helpful to be able to discuss the ideas with the other student-teachers, as some things seemed to work better for others, or in different settings. It was a bit like having a backpack and adding in things that might be useful as we went through the year. Some weeks I could unpack things from the backpack that were really helpful, sometimes they didn't work so well – but comparing notes with others helped me to see different ways to use those ideas.

Compare your solution with what happened.

• What are your thoughts?

The student-teacher gave this story the title: Adding to my backpack!

• Is there useful learning in this story that you could use with your student-teachers?

Taking it further: Pace and purpose

• How do you support your student-teachers with the pace of their lessons?

• How do you help them to ensure that every part of their lesson is purposeful?

• What does this mean for planning?

• How will this be enacted in the classroom?

• How will the intended pace and purpose be shared with the pupils?

Here are some interesting thoughts on pace and purpose.
(https://jamesdurran.blog/2019/08/13/some-thoughts-on-pace/).

Read through this story and see what you notice in this student-teacher's story.

Learning from video recordings

The issue:

I am in my final year of my course. It is important that I keep on developing. My current focus is to act consistently and keep order. This is certainly important in a class with 30 students. The task for my course this week was to video myself teaching in the school context. I recorded three different lessons, and I took the videos to my next centre-based session. My tutor and fellow student-teachers looked at one of the videos with me.

What happened?

My tutor took on a guiding role in this conversation. The tutor's role was to ask questions and encourage my fellow student-teachers to ask questions. The student-teachers gave me ideas about my teaching, and I took these ideas back to school and put them into practice. The teacher mentor at the school was not involved in this. In the end, I had to choose video clips and put them together into a video not longer than 8 minutes. Under each excerpt I had to put text to explain what I was doing. I had to use theory to support my explanations.

What was learnt?

This way of guidance works well, because you get input from multiple perspectives and not only from your teacher mentor in the school. You also learn a lot because you look at yourself; you do many things unconsciously and by looking back you become aware of them. This approach also encourages you to link practice to theory.

I also learned that I got a lot more ideas from the theory than I thought. For example, when I stopped in the middle of a sentence when it was noisy, I would often start again at the beginning of the sentence. The idea from the theory was to just finish the sentence so that you teach the children to listen right away. All this ultimately makes you more aware of your own actions as a teacher.

The 3-D approach (Graham et al., 2012 p. 47)

DISCOVER

This story is about a school-based task that has been designed by the tutor at the centre to help student-teachers to link theory and practice.

- 1. What are the indications that this happened successfully?
- 2. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the task?

DEEPEN

- 3. In what ways could the teacher mentor have contributed to the professional learning of their student-teacher in this task?
- 4. What would have helped this involvement?

DO

- 5. What can we learn about designing school-based tasks?
- 6. In what other ways can you enable student-teachers to make connections between their practice and research or theory?

Graham, S., Lester, N. & Dickerson, C. (2012). Discover – Deepen – Do: a 3D pedagogical approach for developing newly qualified teachers as professional learners. Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 37(9), 43–66.

Taking it further: Designing activities that link theory and practice

Observing practice and giving feedback can be a helpful and direct way to help student-teachers make the links between what happened in their teaching and ideas from research or theory that can provide a different lens to view practice. However, it can be challenging to recall in the moment the ideas that would be most helpful. In the story the student-teacher's practice was captured in video recordings to enable deeper reflection and time to explore what ideas and theories might be most helpful to develop practice further.

Case studies and narratives of practice can also be a useful tool for making these connections – both for student-teachers and for school- and centre-based teacher educators working with them. However, sharing personal experiences for discussion can be uncomfortable and limited. Instead, focussing collaboratively on the teaching experiences of others, within a story or case study, can enable conversations that explore more deeply, and open new areas for discussion. For examples of using narratives for connecting practice with theories and research see:

White, E. and Dickerson, C. (2022) 'Learning from Exploring Narratives of Practice using Educational Theories and Research', in Boyd, P., Szplit, A., and Zbróg, Z. (eds) Developing teachers' research literacy. International Perspectives. Kraków: Wydawnictwo LIBRON, pp. 165–190.