Third Edition of the Training and Assessment Toolkit Reflections/Discussion (NASBTT 2018)

Introduction

The National Association of School-Based Teacher trainers (NASBTT) have launched their third edition of the Training and Assessment Toolkit for Initial Teacher Training (ITT). NASBTT is the association that represents School Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) ITT provision, whereas the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) represents, largely, university and college provision. The two associations are separate, but work closely and have similar goals; they market themselves as the voice of teacher training. The following section draws upon direct pertinent information from the Training and Assessment Toolkit Workshop handout from Monday 16th April 2019.

The Third Edition of the Training and Assessment Toolkit (TAT)

The TAT is a mechanism for assessing initial teacher trainees against the Teachers' Standards while on placement in a school. The toolkit has the following aims;

- To secure accuracy and consistency in assessing and tracking the quality of a trainee's teaching over time *through* (this author's italics) their impact on pupil learning and progress
- Provide the basis for a shared understanding and common language for all members of an ITT partnership

The key considerations developed in this third edition of the TAT are;

- How well trainees teach should be assessed by the impact their teaching has on all pupil's progress and learning over time: this should be the driver for all partnership processes
- The focus on progress "over time" for trainees and pupils increases the significance of ensuring well-timed review points

The TAT is evidence based on holistic professional judgements and as the Teachers' Standards are interrelated, a shortfall in trainee skills against any one standard is likely to impact on the progress pupils make. This means that the weekly meetings held between the trainee and their school-based mentor should be evaluative, focus on the impact of teaching on the pupil progress, which will generate pupil-focused targets. The pupil data used as evidence to judge a trainee's progress is termed an evidence bundle, its purpose is to identify;

- The impact on pupil progress to determine the strength of their teaching
- How it can inform accurate learner-focused target setting.

The effective use of a trainee's evidence bundle can;

- Ensure that trainee assessment is informed by the full range of evidence **beyond** (the document's bold) observation
- Judge by the impact on pupil progress
- Avoids reliance on a numerical system
- Reduces collection of evidence not directly related to pupil progress.

This leads to the following format;

| Pupil progress | Quality of trainee against each Standard | Overall quality of trainee |

The TAT anchors quality of trainee with pupil progress;

- The impact on pupil's progress is dependent upon the skills and knowledge trainees demonstrate as they teach
- A lack of skill results in limited pupil progress
- Trainee targets are pupil focused
- A trainees strength will be evaluated on the amount of pupil progress

A typical evidence bundle could consist of the following;

- Pupil data
- Annotated samples of pupils' work, including homework
- Self and peer assessments undertaken by pupils
- Trainee examples of marking
- Examples of planning, observations and lesson evaluations focusing on pupil progress
- Exams and tests
- Samples of pupils' progress
- Start and end points of pupil progress

Reflection/Discussion

There is no doubt that in a performative educational system that teaching and learning within the educational setting are directly linked, the only point open for discussion is what that learning should consist of, is it knowledge of the curriculum, work related skills/life related skills, health and wellbeing awareness, morals, religious dogma/diversity, citizenship, metacognition or indeed merely to generate a love of learning, the list is endless! The TAT is very much curriculum based and focuses solely on an initial teacher trainee's ability to impact positively on pupil progress within the National Curriculum and beyond. 'The key factor in judging the quality of teaching over time is the impact teaching has on the quality of learning' (OFSTED 2018a Paragraph 128). The Preamble to the Teachers' Standards state that 'teachers make the education of their pupils their first concern, and are accountable for achieving the highest possible standards in work and conduct' (DFE no date). Indeed Teachers' Standard 2 'Promote good progress and outcomes by pupils' stipulates the importance of working towards maximum pupil achievement'. However, it should not be forgotten that the Teachers' Standards are intended for teachers' capability, as well as trainee teachers to be judged on their capacity to learn how to teach. Notwithstanding the realisation, that ITT is not the end of a trainee teachers learning, as the Newly Qualified Teaching (NQT) three school terms completes their induction into the teaching profession, along with their entitlement for further continuous professional development, as well as a reduced timetable, in recognition that they have not fully formed. Surely a discussion point with regards to coupling teacher trainees' individual and overall Teachers' Standards grade solely on their impact on pupil progress is very much determined by circumstance and chance and does not opportune the trainees who find themselves placed in more challenging circumstances, which condones an unfair playing field. Furthermore, if we were to couple judgement of experienced teachers' practice with the Teachers' Standards solely based on pupil progress would this mean that a large percentage of the teaching workforce were not fit to

practice? For example, considering the most recent OFSTED reports for Secondary schools consisting of 3,135 schools in England, 21% are considered inadequate or in need of improvement and Secondary schools inspected between September 2016 and 2017, 900 in total, 38% were awarded grades 3 or 4. Another example posed could be the Government's gold standard of English and Mathematics grade 4 or above at GCSE, approximately 30% of 16 years olds failed to reach this standard (GOV.UK 2018). Combining these two factors, OFSTED rating and GCSE performance in English and Mathematics, does this imply that 30% of the teaching workforce is not having the desired impact on pupil progress and so therefore is not fit to teach? It is interesting to note that even OFSTED recognise the unfair playing field;

> 'A common factor in the schools that do not improve to good or outstanding is that they have a higher proportion of deprived pupils. Fifty-five per cent of the schools that currently require improvement have high proportions of pupils from deprived areas' (OFSTED 2018)

It probably would not take too long to find that pupils emanating from these deprived backgrounds also form the bulk of 16 year olds who do not achieve the Government's gold standard in English and Mathematics.

An interesting dichotomy was included at the Workshop in that a session on trainee workload was included as a separate seminar. The Teacher Workload, Survey 2016, Research report (DfE 2016), recognises the serious nature of teacher workload in schools and could be the most significant factor in teacher resilience and retention within schools. The survey reports that on average Secondary school teachers working week is 54 hours and 17 hours on the weekend, 8 of which is taken by marking pupils' work. 42% of Primary school teachers responding said that they spent too much time assessing pupils, in contrast to 34% of managers saying that they did. 75% of a Primary and 66% of Secondary teachers administrative time is spent recording, inputting, monitoring and analysing data in relation to pupil performance. 93% of teachers reported that workload was a very serious/fairly serious problem. The question then arises that if the government recognises workload as an issue and that the performance monitoring of pupil progress is a major force in driving workload, then why would ITT deliberately couple impact on pupil progress to the capacity to learn to teach? The Government survey indicates the effects of school performance on teacher workload; could there be a direct correlation between workload stresses of teachers in underperforming schools? If so, does that indicate the nurture of the TAT emanating from NASBTT who represent SCITT providers, which are schools that have proven OFSTED capacity and proven school performance? Does this explain the selective nature of ITT provision; see LBU comparative data on ITT Secondary disabled and ethnic recruitment. Further research is required on this subject as the initiation of the TAT is not based on any published or peer reviewed evidence and consideration of trainees workload and health needs to be considered.

The case for or against coupling ITT to pupil progress

As previously mentioned, the TAT documentation produced for the launch of the 3rd edition does not reference peer reviewed research, or indeed any research in support of coupling ITT to pupil progress, other than anecdotal evidence from players involved in the development of the toolkit. Therefore, the vulnerable workplace learning practice for trainee teachers that Lofthouse and Thomas (2014) refer to now becomes even more pronounced. The culture of 'high-stakes testing' (Ball 2003) is positioned on trainee teachers through their school based mentor's anxiety. Wilson's 'cultural-historical activity theory (2014) recognises that mentors perceive trainees through the lens of the school, so a school were performance plays a key part will automatically focus teaching and learning on achievement and assessment. This 'formalisation of work processes' (Imants et al. 2010

and 2013) stultifies the trainees learning, as pupil assessment and achievement are now the focus. Because both mentor and trainee have the same goal, i.e. pupil progress towards achievement, trainee risk taking is stemmed and the trainee directly follows host teacher's directions. Any deviation from teacher led direction; if it fails to result in pupil progress will be deemed as fail, Hobson and Malderez (2013) termed this 'judgementoring'. This is why Lofthouse and Thomas set out to prove that mentoring trainee teachers is more complex than mere judgement and followed the socio-cultural practice of Kemmis et al. (2012), termed the theory of practice architecture.

Conclusion

Schools are not factories, teachers are not production managers, school policies/procedures are not standing operating procedures for production lines and pupils are not widgets that can be quality controlled or assessed, unless of course the pupils can be selected for their ability to perform to expectations like manufactured products can. Selection of children, through the back door, creates an unfair playing field in the league table of school performance and now, it seems, an unfair playing field for trainee teachers, because just as teachers working in more challenging circumstances are demoralised by poor OFSTED outcomes, triggered by underperformance or inability to reach threshold targets, trainee teachers, who find themselves, through no fault of their own, will also find it difficult to show performance in comparison to trainees working in high performance schools. The NASBTT represents SCITT ITT providers, whose members naturally are working in high performance schools. The TAT claims that it does not rely on a numerical judgement, but pupil performance is just that. A remark made by a speaker at the launch of the 3rd edition stated that trainees often claim that due to the amount of stress and anxiety abound in their high performance training school; they make a decision that that is not the type of school they would like for a career in teaching. If we are to revitalise teaching as a desirable profession, engaging trainee teachers in such high stakes rolls of the dice is not going to bring about success for recruitment or retention. There needs to be more research in this field, both qualitative and quantitative in order to analyse the impact that coupling teacher training solely to pupil performance is having.

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