**Mentoring the beginning teacher: some strategies**

As Harrison et.al. note in their article titled “Mentoring the beginning teacher: developing professional autonomy through critical reflection on practice” (2005), the mentor has a role to play in developing the critical thinking of trainee teachers: “Meetings that focus only a tutor’s feedback from lesson observations … appear to deter the process of critical reflection on practice” (p.436). The following are examples of specific interventions (sourced from Harrison et.al., 2005) that we hope will facilitate critical reflective practice by mentees and encourage critical questioning by mentors. It is anticipated that discussions between you and your mentee will not only focus on feedback from lesson observations, but may include one of the following strategies to promote critical thought about subject-specific practice:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Method** | **Involves** | **Key questions** | **Desired outcome** |
| **Critical Thinking**  | A trigger event or practice problem is identified, appraised and explored.  | * What were the alternative ways of handling it?
 | * Improved professional practice, skills and attitudes.
 |
| **Experiential Learning**  | Your mentor will select an event for reflection and ask you to analyse this experience. | * What happened?
* Why?
* What was expected to happen?
* What does it mean?
 | * The process may result in a personal theory or, more simply, a detailed personal record of what has been learnt. The final stage is when what has been learned is tried out. The cycle then repeats itself.
 |
| **Action research** | A practice problem is identified and a hypothesis formulated about the situation. This method has four stages: plan; act; observe; and reflect. The cycle is repeated until the theory matches the practice. | * What does the experience mean?
* What can be learnt from it?
* How does the practice match the theory?
* How does the theory need readjusting?
* Will the teaching change next time?
 | * Improved practice, action planning and meaningful reflection-on-practice.
* To articulate the pedagogical reasoning that accompanies practice.
 |
| **Critical Incident**  | A particular event in classroom (usually a success or a failure) will be identified. You will be asked to describe the incident to the mentor and identify the assumptions that were made about the students’ prior learning. Your mentor will discuss these assumptions with you and draw up a new set of assumptions. You will test these out in the next teaching session. This process repeats itself until the theory and the practice match. | * What assumptions were made about the students’ prior learning?
 | * To revise assumptions about teaching and learning.
 |
| **Storytelling** | You will be asked to construct a narrative (written or oral) based on a key teaching event.  | * What happened and why?
* What was expected to happen?
* What did the event and its consequences mean to you?
* How will the event affect future teaching?
 | * To stimulate re-framing of future practice.
 |