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The Trainee Experience

Work based learning : influences,
expectations and mixed messages

Liz Dixon April 2010



Overview

- Influences, Expectations and Mixed Messages
- Learning in a work place
- Developing teacher identity
- Role of teacher educator:
 - Visual methods to explore these issues
- Trainee experiences : what is it like learning to teach in the Learning and Skills sector?



A blast from the past ...
July 2005




Trainees learning to teach

- Work based experience is pivotal to any teacher training programme
- Learning which occurs in the work place helps to shape the skills, understanding and values of trainee teachers
- What is being learned?
- How is it being learned?
- Who or what influences the learning?



The initial training of further education teachers OFSTED Nov 2003

-There is also a **lack of systematic monitoring and support in the workplace**, and trainees' progress is inhibited by insufficient observation and feedback on their teaching.
-The lack of systematic and effective mentoring arrangements for trainees on the majority of FE teacher training courses is a major weakness. Few colleges provide their trainees with sustained support from experienced practitioners who can assist them in developing good teaching skills in their own subject. There is an **over-reliance on informal forms of support**, and the **roles of mentors are often not defined in sufficient detail. Where mentoring support is provided, the standard is extremely variable and, in most cases, not well-resourced.**
-Work-based mentors contribute to the monitoring of trainees' progress through session observations in only a few providers. In most providers, **there is too little, if any, formal communication between course tutors and mentors, line managers or heads of department about the progress that trainees are making, and about any needs that have to be met.**

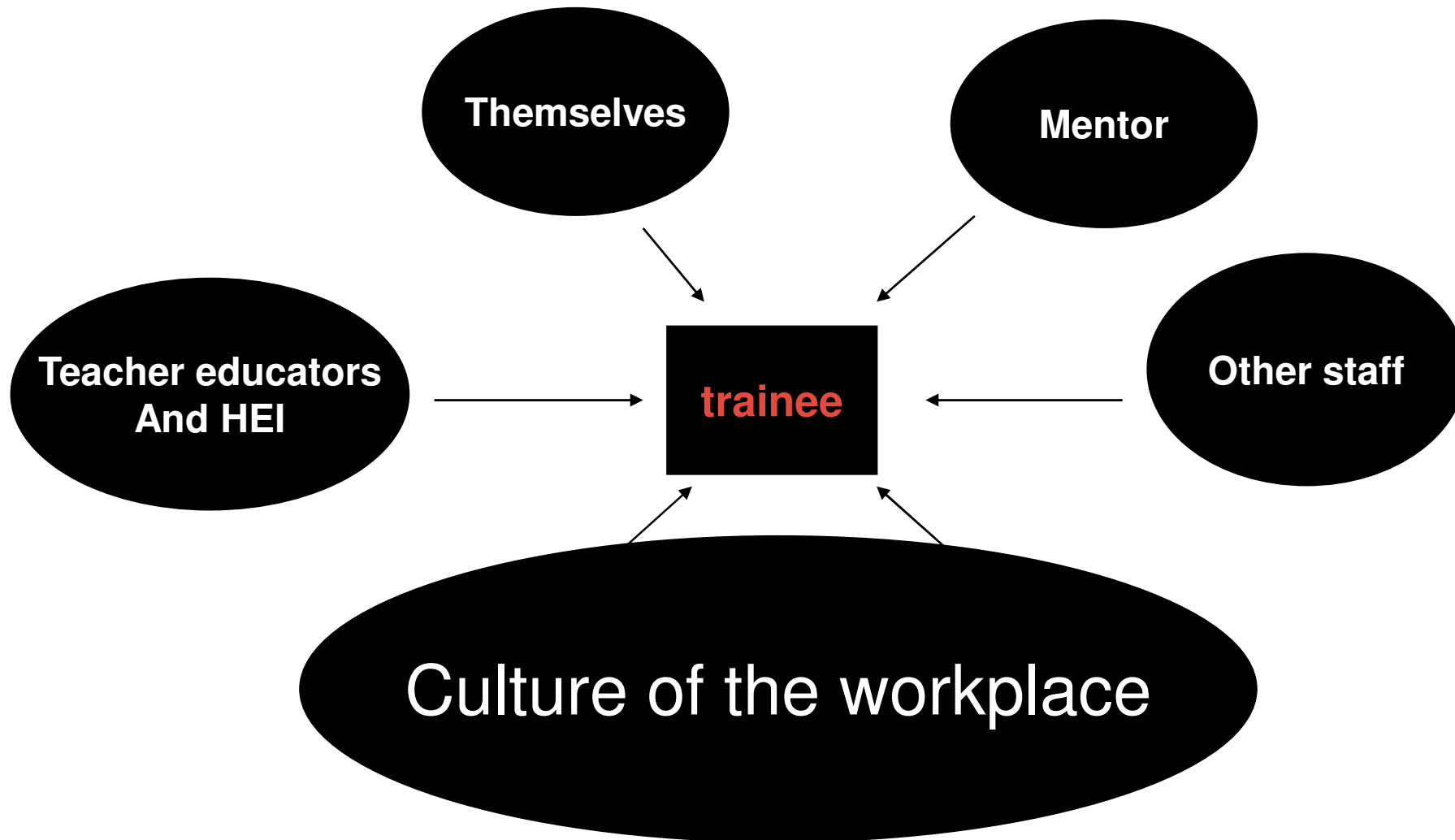


What is the purpose of the work based experience?

- To develop a set of skills? – reductionist, technician approach
- To develop knowledge and understanding of the work place?
- To extend subject pedagogy?
- To link theory with practice?
- To develop critical, reflective practitioners?

Key interested parties may have differing responses to the question

Influences on the trainee





Dislocation between expectations and 'reality'

- Trainees' expectations themselves
- Trainees' expectations placement
 - Mentors
 - Staff
 - Students
 - What they will teach
 - Level of support
 - Approaches to teaching and learning

- Teacher trainers' expectations of trainee
- Mentors' expectations of trainee
- Staff expectations of trainees
- Institution's expectation of trainees

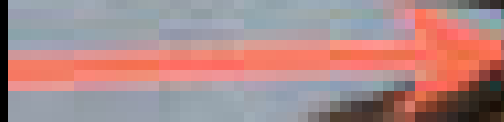
**Reality of placement / place of work
Back to life, back to reality !!**

Mixed messages

Rock

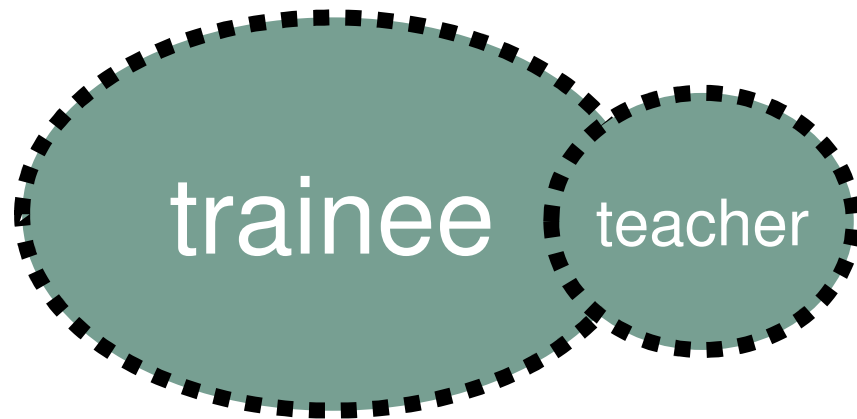
Trainee
is here

Hard place

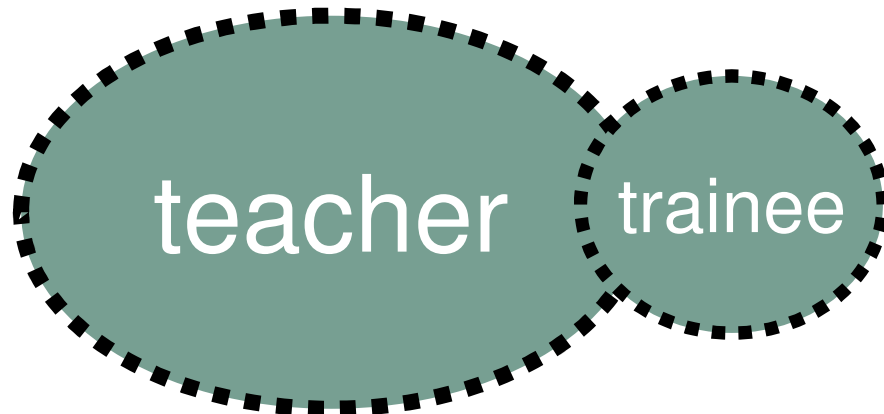




Dual identities



Pre-service

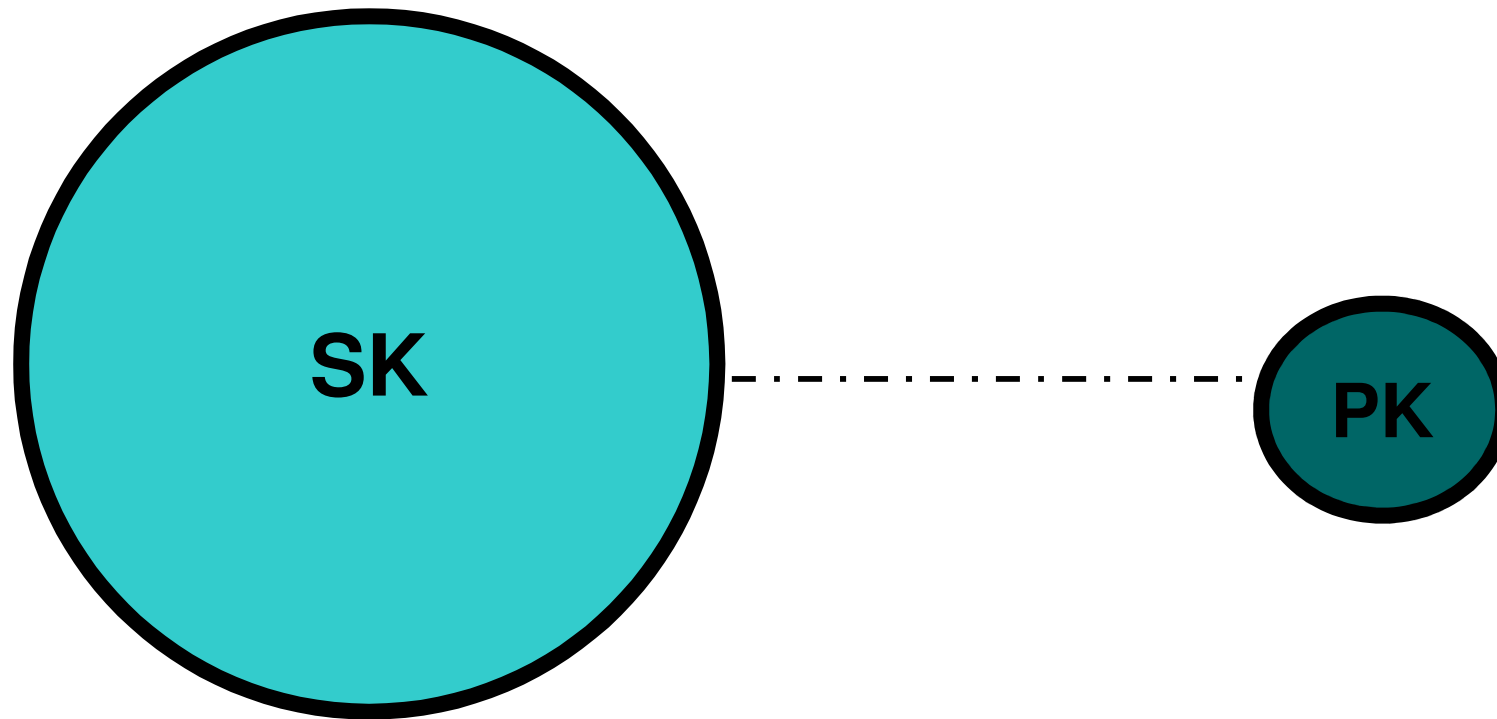


In -service



**SUBJECT CONTENT
KNOWLEDGE
(SK)**

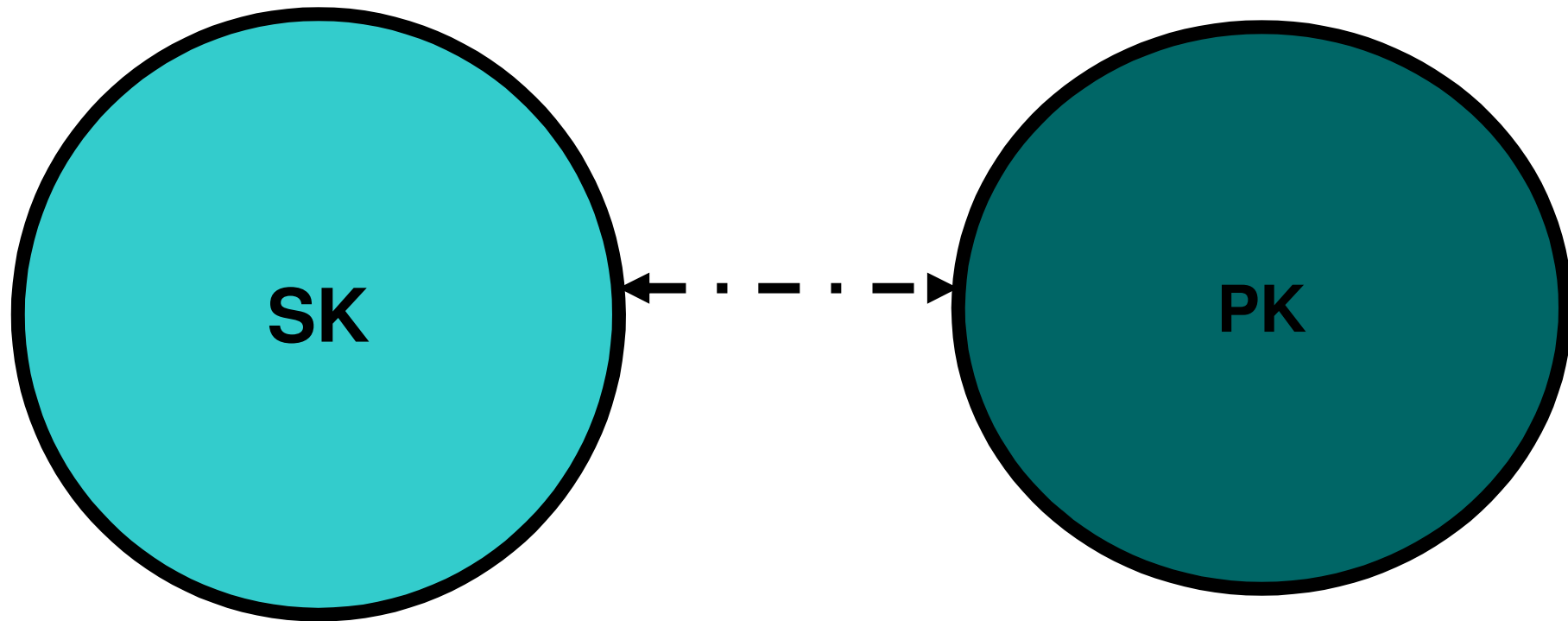
**PEDAGOGICAL CONTENT
KNOWLEDGE
(PK)**





**SUBJECT CONTENT
KNOWLEDGE
(SK)**

**PEDAGOGICAL CONTENT
KNOWLEDGE
(PK)**



Wellington J & Ireson G (2008) Science Learning, Science Teaching



Is that 'tingling feeling' enough?

- Reconciling ideals and reality of the experience in FE
- Influenced by
 - memories of how they were treated themselves at school / college
 - teachers who were interested in their curriculum area
- Trainees reported both positive and negative experiences on teaching placement
- Lack of recognition about the broader context in which they are working and its impact on teaching and learning.

(Bathmaker and Avis, 2005)
13



Work based learning

- Formal
- Planned
- Linked to ITT curriculum
- ‘How to
- predominantly skills based
- Informal
- Unplanned
- May lead to critique of practices within the PCET sector
- ‘Why
- Often values based.



What is work-based learning?

- Sitting by Nellie
 - Teaching as a set of technical skills to be passed on. (Learning seen as acquisition)
- Situated learning
 - Teaching as an identity and behaviour that is absorbed through osmosis (Learning seen as participation)



My own experience

- ‘You’re doing really well. We’d like you to do more work for us.’
- How did they know?
- I didn’t kill anyone.
- There weren’t any riots.
- How did I know what to do?
- No one ever saw me teach.
- No one ever told me what to do.



When individuals engage in activities in the workplace they access knowledge that is socially sourced and situationally constituted. However, what is learnt from socially determined practices is also dependent upon the individual themselves and the how and what they participate in: knowledge is co-constructed

Billett (2004)

Eraut (2004) : 'Iceberg metaphor'



- Visible, above the surface
 - Codified knowledge
- Below the surface
 - Cultural knowledge
 - Personal knowledge
 - Transfer of learning – theory to practice



Teaching identity and the tightrope walker



Developing Identity
(Winograd,2005)



Developing Identity

■ Teacher identity

- Stable core
- Socially constructed
- Multiple, competing and contradictory
- 'Identities are contingent and temporary, dependent on changing situations, including my own evolving knowledge of teaching.'

(Winograd,2005 p261)



Biography and Teacher Identity

- Trainee's awareness of self
- Their own values and beliefs
- Their prior experience
- Their image of teaching and teachers
- Problematic?



My biographical baggage

- Values and beliefs
- 50 something
- White, female
- Arguably a privileged economic and cultural position
- Grammar school education (Church school)
- Work experience – residential school for deaf children
- Nurse training
- Family
- FE teaching
- HE teaching



- All this is likely to shape trainees starting position re values, beliefs, and priorities. It will also give them a framework/model for how to do things – teacher style, role of the teacher.
- To what extent do trainees recognise this?

Reverting to type – Asif :

‘I modelled it on past experience from what my A level teachers did and what happened at university. and there it was just lectures.

The teacher just stood up and like nearly the whole two hours was just writing on the board and then maybe half way through just giving you some questions to do..

so I modelled it exactly on how I was taught,.... the way I was taught so it was just natural that I picked that up.

Reverting to type – Asif :

I found it very difficult to go from that model cos I'm very reserved.....it takes me time to get used to people and for me to actually, you know, **transform** to that different type of teaching was very hard and **I just had to do it gradually.**

Asif moving on:

Once that time has passed then eventually they [students] open up and you open up cos the first few weeks it was like hell cos there was that big barrier there like you have your stuff...

But then as time went on I could just move around freely get talking to some of them and even have a laugh with them and they enjoyed it. Some of them even actually enjoyed coming to the class. They didn't say it but you could tell .



Competing identities

- 'I was full of self-doubt and often frazzled before, during and after working with students. On the surface however I constructed a teacher voice of confidence and control, since I wanted people to think I was competent.....I feared that people would see through the mask.'

(Winograd 2005 p256)



Confident front

- We can consciously learn to adopt a “confident front” as a means of coping with nerves.
- This should be on the LLL curriculum to help overcome barriers to learning.


Norman, M & Hyland, T (2003)



Reverting to type

- Lack of confidence
- A desire to be seen to be competent
- Conflicting advice
- Lack of experience
- Lack of knowledge and understanding about alternatives
- Lack of time

All mitigate towards the likelihood of reverting to type or playing safe.



Freeing up the trainee voice to explore these issues

- Use of models and metaphors
- Speaking through doing
- Early in the course
- Supports reflection
- Articulates anxieties, preconceptions, no 'right way'.



“Thick description” (Geertz 1973)

Finding methods that allow participants to give their own thick description of themselves, their context, relationships and activities in the workplace.

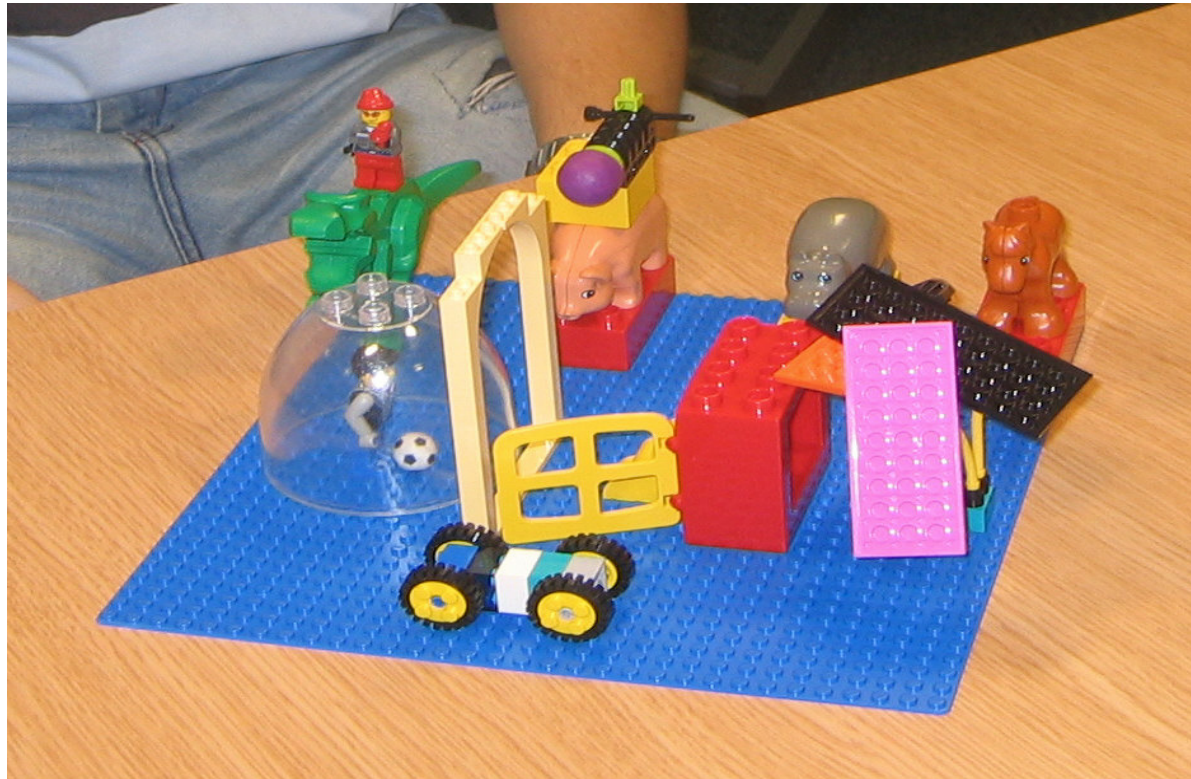


Visual and Creative methods

- It is a good way of building sociological knowledge, and it offers a positive challenge to the taken-for-granted idea that you can explore the social world just by asking people things in language.
- Different ways into people's thinking and ways of expressing themselves

(David Gauntlett)

Placement experience



Opportunities to 'drill down'





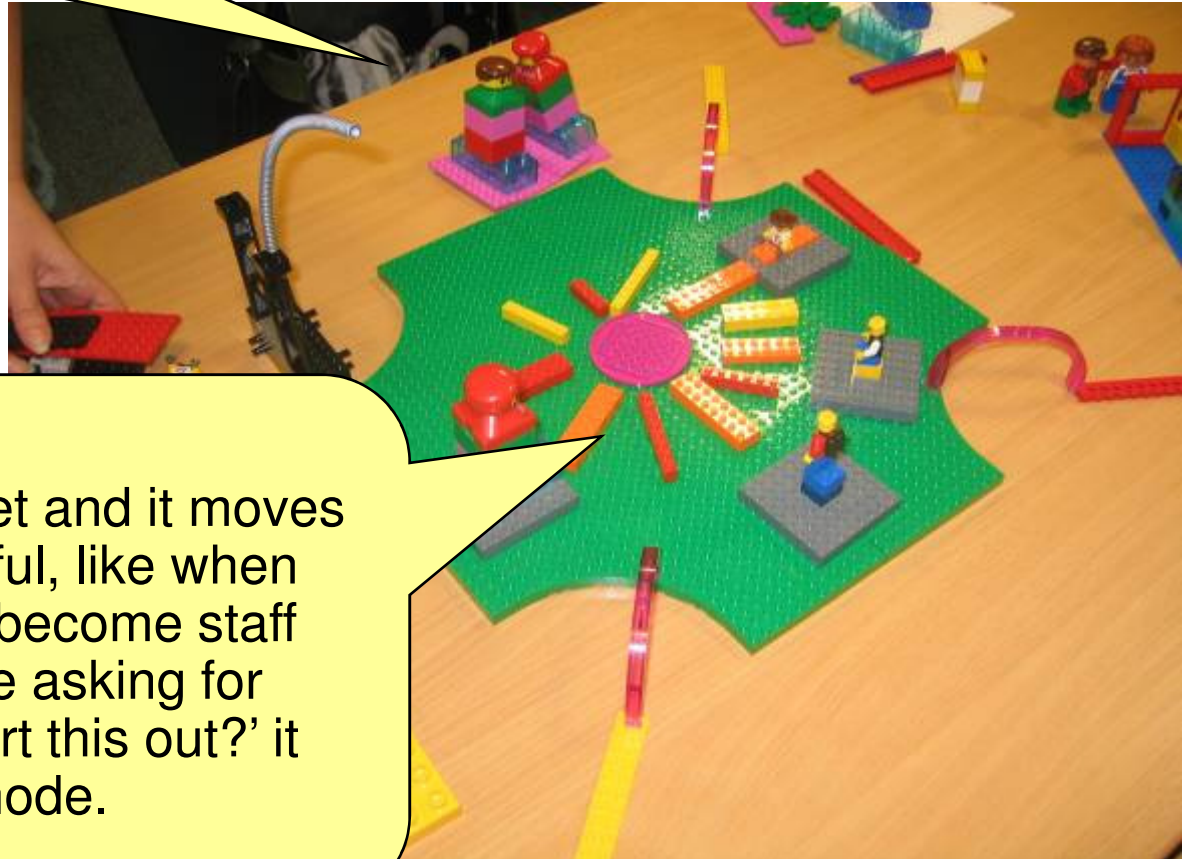
It was like being put into the trenches and realising that once I got over the hard bit it was a good experience to have.

My mentor is actually Lord Lucan. I'm lucky to find him and when I do he's always so busy that I get the impression that he forgot he was supposed to meet me until I'm there....I bet I could probably be here for the rest of the year and he wouldn't chase up my progress because he won't remember who I am. I can understand from his point of view that I'm probably just an unwanted inconvenience.



Yeah. I was terrified when I first went because I come from a very traditional educational background and I was stunned at the low standard in the college and some of the attitudes of the students I could not believe. Just the personal communication was shocking. But now it's fine and when I meet my students in the street they will come and say hello but all that took a while.

It's a good job I'm fairly confident, easy going and have some experience. They are very happy to land this on my plate which if you weren't strong enough you could easily go under rather than say 'No'.

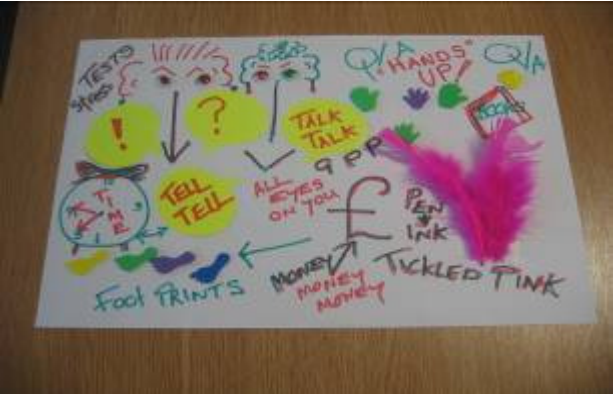


I think that boundary isn't set and it moves – sometimes when it's helpful, like when people ask us to cover, we become staff and other times, when we're asking for things, saying, 'could we sort this out?' it goes back to that student mode.

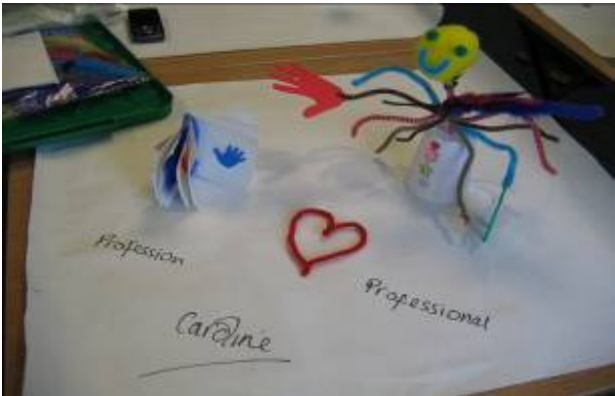
Placement induction : introduction to reflection



Images of teachers

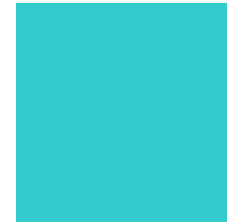


Professionalism





The voice of experience





In conclusion:

- Need to encourage trainees to articulate their experience
- Getting behind the 'confident front'
- Exploring the core and wobbles on the tightrope
- Institutions need to listen to trainees
- Institutions need to support and encourage trainee learning



Teacher educators:

- Trainees could consider the impact of learning in the workplace
- Help them to think about how they learn in the workplace and their emerging identities
- Exposing trainees to theories of work based learning (WBL)
- Enable them to explore their possible responses to WBL and culture

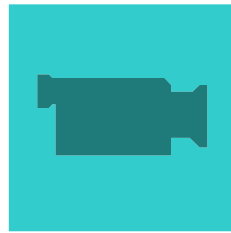


Pre-service / In-service

- Are trainees given a chance to learn?
 - To experiment?
 - To make mistakes?
 - To take risks?
 - To develop?
- Impact of monitoring and grading
- Is there a culture of learning to teach in the organisation?
- How might this be developed?



Back to life, back to reality





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