

## **Educative mentoring: a key to professional learning for geography teachers and mentors**

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### **Abstract**

The chapter explores the potential of ‘educative mentoring’ to support the development of geography teachers. We begin by exploring the principles of educative mentoring, drawing on the ideas of knowledge-*of*-practice (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999, Langdon and Ward, 2015), enquiry as stance and co-construction of knowledge within a professional learning community. We examine educative mentoring not only in terms of benefits for the beginning teacher, but also for the mentor, pupils and the wider school. There is a brief discussion of the benefits of using an educative approach in geography education, linking to the dynamic and contested nature of the subject and the importance of critically engaging with theory and practice. Three common tasks completed by a geography mentor and beginning teacher are then explored through an educative mentoring lens. These practical examples suggest ways in which geography mentors can take an educative mentoring approach in collaborative planning, observation and post-lesson dialogue, and collaborative marking. The chapter concludes with suggested next steps for the geography mentor.

### **Introduction**

Educative mentoring is argued in this chapter to be a core professional practice, one that enables the beginning teacher and the mentor to benefit from sustained collaboration in which both parties learn. Mentoring that is *educative* is a professional practice for both participants, set within an overall vision of effective teaching and learning. It therefore rejects ‘quick-fix’ or solution-focused strategies that are frequently based on the mentor passing on knowledge about ‘how things are done’ (Daly and Milton, 2017, p.182) in particular geography classrooms. It is linked to a ‘vision of good teaching and a developmental view of learning to teach’ (Norman and Feiman-Nemser, 2005, p.680). This makes it distinctive from mentoring

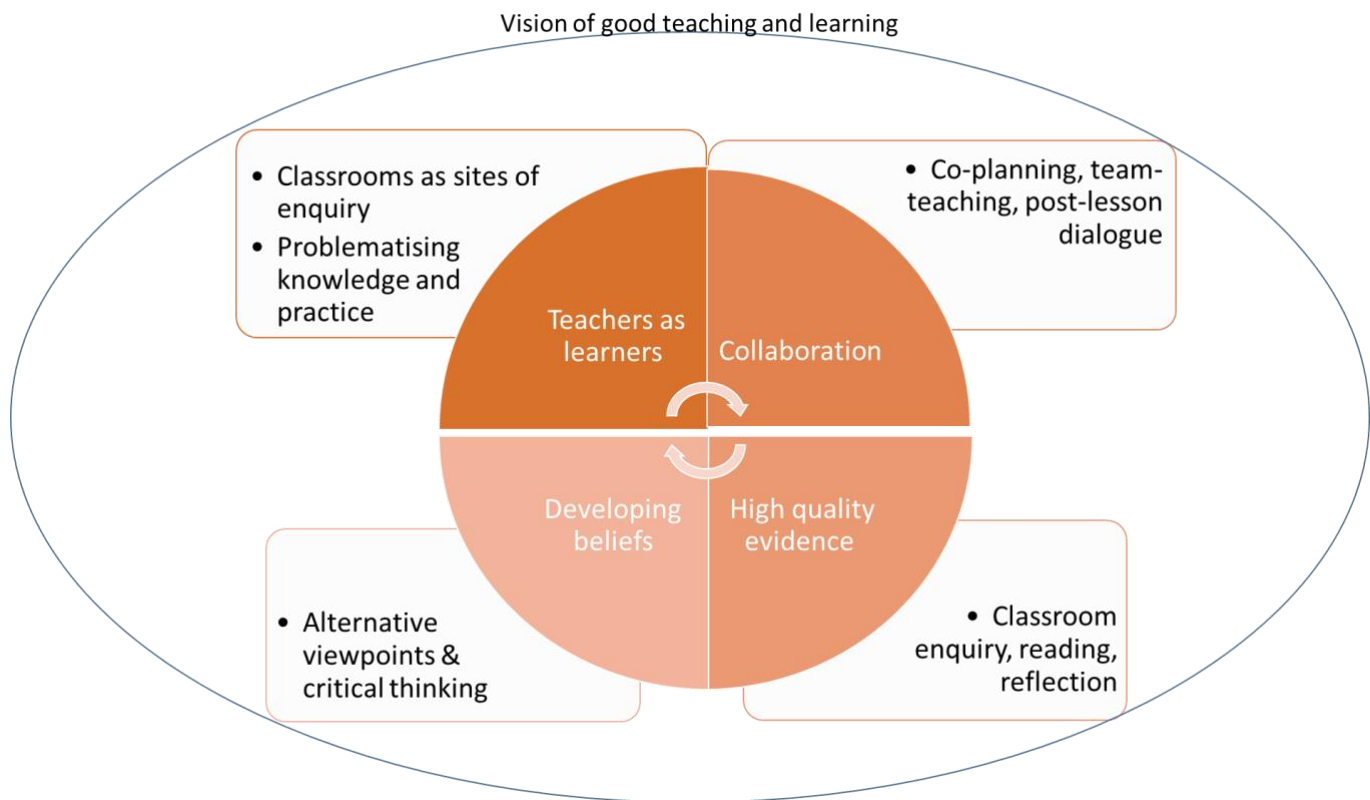
approaches linked to psychological support and technical advice, as described by Wang and Odersell (2002). The practice-focused needs of beginning teachers are met by establishing a set of professional habits that emphasise they are *professional learners* alongside their mentor – and develop through shared enquiry approaches to developing as a teacher. Educative mentoring is based on the belief that both mentees *and* mentors deepen their professional knowledge and practice through shared, critical thinking about how to respond to learners’ needs and the demands of learning in the subject. In analysing the benefits of educative mentoring, Langdon (2017, p.531) argues that

a collaborative self-development approach is likely to produce and reproduce teachers who understand that they, alongside their colleagues, are able to draw on their own and others’ expertise to improve their practice throughout their careers.

First, we outline the principles that underpin educative mentoring practices. Three common tasks completed by a geography mentor and beginning teacher are then explored through an educative mentoring lens. These practical examples suggest ways in which geography mentors can practise educative mentoring to develop collaborative planning, observation and post-lesson dialogue, and collaborative marking. We suggest how such an approach can support the career-long development of geography teachers.

## **What are the underpinning principles and characteristics of educative mentoring?**

Ultimately, educative mentoring (like any mentoring process) aims to continuously improve learning for all pupils in the classroom. Figure 15.1 presents a model of the underpinning principles and characteristics of educative mentoring, demonstrating its inter-related components that sit within a vision of good teaching and learning that is jointly developed between mentor and mentee.



**Figure 15.1 Underpinning principles and characteristics of educative mentoring**

The model positions all teachers as learners within the classroom, including both the mentor and the beginning teacher. Rather than an expert-novice relationship, there is a focus on a collaborative learning process.

### **Teachers as learners**

At the heart of the process of educative mentoring is shared exploration of questions that develop practice, whereby both practitioners view the classroom as a site of enquiry (Norman and Feiman-Nemser, 2005). In viewing the classroom in this way, and seeing the mentor-beginning teacher relationship as dynamic, both parties become involved in actively problematising everyday events and actions involved in teaching. They aim to build ‘knowledge-of-practice’ (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999):

...implicit in the idea of knowledge-of-practice is the assumption that, through inquiry, teachers across the professional life span - from very new to very experienced

- make problematic their own knowledge and practice as well as the knowledge and practice of others and thus stand in a different relationship to knowledge. (p.273)

This represents teacher knowledge and practice as ongoing and continuously developing. It is different from ‘knowledge-*for*-practice’, where knowledge that has been generated elsewhere (such as through external research) is studied and applied. It is also different from ‘knowledge-*in*-practice’, where teachers build their knowledge from experience, observations and trial and error.

### **Collaboration**

‘Knowledge-*of*-practice’ situates teachers as continuous learners, collaborating with others as co-learners and co-thinkers, working towards a vision of good teaching and learning (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999; Langdon and Ward, 2015). Through the adoption of ‘inquiry-*as*-stance’ (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009) both the beginning teacher and the mentor are able to challenge assumptions about the norms of teaching and learning within their context, and in wider education (Daly and Milton, 2017). Collaboration is at the heart of unravelling problems of practice that face the beginning teacher and are relevant to all teachers. The quality and focus of mentoring dialogue is of critical importance here, focused around specific collaborative practices that can involve co-planning, team teaching and post-lesson dialogue for example.

### **Generating high quality evidence**

The classroom as a site of enquiry can provide rich and meaningful evidence of pupil learning, as a core way of understanding the effects of pedagogical approaches and learning activities that are being tried out by mentees. Examples of this include building case studies of how individuals or groups of pupils respond to particular teaching approaches in the beginning teacher classroom; observation of pupil learning by the mentor/mentee during team teaching episodes; gathering pupil views on aspects of the geography curriculum to inform planning to teach; and capturing beginning teacher reflection within post-lesson mentor dialogue.

### **Developing beliefs**

Educative mentoring contrasts with an ‘expert-novice’ relationship which may influence the beginning teacher to simply reproduce existing practice embodied by the mentor, rather than developing a thoughtful, nuanced vision of geography teaching that is developmental. This

developmental approach is compatible with the mentor modelling effective practices for beginning teachers, and demonstrating a range of established approaches to geography teaching and learning. However, such modelling is accompanied by critical reasoning by both parties, based on discussion about the purposes of teaching geography and the needs of specific pupils in particular classrooms, frequently linked to reading research. Beginning teachers need to locate the mentor's style of teaching and common features of established practices within wider debates about effective geography teaching (Tapsfield, 2019). Therefore, post-lesson dialogue, and the ability of the mentor to be able to articulate the thinking and reasoning behind pedagogical and curriculum decisions is important. It opens discussion about the principles and beliefs underpinning the choices made. This works both ways. Through mentor dialogue, the beginning teacher learns to articulate their reasoning for curriculum and pedagogical decisions and the changing understanding on which they are based.

## **Mentoring within an expansive learning environment**

Clearly, the educative mentoring relationship described here is based on cultural norms being present in a school, facilitating a habit of open questioning, building curiosity about how pupils learn and encouraging risk-taking as a joint endeavour among staff. Hodkinson's (2009) research in secondary schools identified features of 'expansive' and 'restrictive' environments for teachers' development, adapted from Fuller and Unwin's study of workplace learning (2003) (see Table 15.1).

<b>Expansive</b>	<b>Restrictive</b>
Close collaborative working	Isolated, individualist working
Colleagues mutually supportive of learning	Colleagues obstruct or do not support each other's learning
An explicit focus on learning as a dimension of normal working practices	No explicit focus on teacher learning, except to meet crises or imposed initiatives
Supported opportunities for personal development that goes beyond school or government priorities	Teacher learning mainly strategic compliance with government or school agendas
Out of school educational opportunities including time to stand back, reflect and think differently	Few out of school educational opportunities, only narrow, short training programmes

Opportunities to integrate off-site learning into everyday practice	No opportunity to integrate off-the-job learning
Opportunity to extend professional identity through boundary crossing into other departments, school activities, schools and beyond	Work restricted to home departmental team within one school. Opportunities for boundary crossing only come with a job changes
Support for local variation in ways of working and learning for teachers and work groups	Standardized approaches to teacher learning are prescribed and imposed
Teachers use a wide range of learning opportunities	Teachers use a narrow range of learning approaches

**Table 15. 1 Expansive-restrictive learning environments for teachers (Hodkinson, 2009, p.165).**

Expansive environments are those which support the learning of all practitioners, recognising that collaboration is key. For mentors to be able to initiate and maintain educative mentoring relationships, the features of an expansive school workplace environment are essential. These affect the mentor’s self-perception of what it means to be a learner as an experienced teacher. Expansive environments support enquiry approaches that may question existing beliefs about how geography is taught and how pupils are experiencing it. In other words, educative mentoring can be unsettling. Indeed it should be, because it supports the possibility of transformational professional learning, by which individual beliefs can shift and inform continually evolving practice. *Adaptive expertise* is identified as an advanced professional attribute among educative mentors (Langdon, 2017). It is the capacity to continually scrutinise routines and behaviours in one’s own teaching and to seek information on which to base new alternatives (Timperley, 2011). Adaptive experts are able to respond to situations where practice can be enhanced and are open to change. Such expertise is supported by a school environment in which it is safe to question existing routines and to seek new ways of working, based on rich evidence generated with the beginning teacher in the classroom, as well as found in external sources. It is clear that school leadership plays a vital role in creating the conditions that support educative mentoring. Educative mentoring can thrive in schools that function as effective learning communities, in which enquiry into practice is the norm and adaptive expertise is recognised as a key to effective teaching.

## **Educative mentoring in geography**

This section aims to illustrate how educative mentoring might be approached in geography mentoring of beginning teachers. It draws on typical tasks that the beginning teacher and mentor are likely to carry out: collaborative planning, observations linked to post-lesson dialogue, and collaborative marking.

### **Collaborative planning**

Planning is a central task for the beginning teacher, and is essential to supporting pupils' geographical understanding and progress. The beginning teacher should consider individual lesson planning, but it is also important that they consider progress of pupils across sequences of lessons, and how these sequences build geographical knowledge and understanding across the geography curriculum. The topic 'development', a geographical concept that is often taught in the UK as it is featured in the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum (DFE, 2013), as well as in GCSE and A-level specifications (DFE, 2014a, 2014b), is used here to demonstrate how planning might be approached. The focus is on collaboration, situating the mentor and beginning teacher as co-thinkers, rather than the mentor checking and approving a lesson plan, or scheme of work.

Development is a contested concept in geography, in the sense that it has been politicised in the past and continues to be a concept which is discussed in academia and geography education circles (Lambert and Morgan, 2010). Much of the discussion is around the representations of different places, the ways in which development is taught in school geography, sometimes using a moralistic perspective, and how different geographical perspectives can support pupil understanding, enabling them to take a more critical view of the world (Standish, 2020, 2018; Willis, 2014). Lambert and Morgan put forward the argument that drawing on the concept of interdependence, the nature of connections and relationships between people and places, can broaden 'traditional and sometimes tired notions of 'development' in the geography curriculum' (2010, p108). Standish (2020) argues that teaching needs to move beyond, and away from, binary and reductionist notions of development. The Black Lives Matter movement and calls to decolonise the curriculum have increased the responsibilities of geography teachers to draw from a diverse range of perspectives, such as indigenous geographies, and question the structure of geographical knowledge which can be viewed as colonial control within the discipline (Barker and Pickerell, 2020; Clement, 2019). These discussions indicate the dilemmas and professional

learning opportunities for both mentor and mentee in planning to teach this topic in the beginning teacher's classroom.

It is likely that a geography department in a school will have a set of resources and a scheme of work or curriculum plan, outlining the content and skills to be taught in a unit about, or incorporating development, with potential activities for teaching. A useful starting point would be for both the mentor and beginning teacher to spend some time reviewing and discussing the materials, potentially problematising the plans and the resources, based on questions that explore the purpose of the curriculum and the ways in which pupils are able to make sense of the geography.

As co-thinkers and collaborators, both the mentor and beginning teacher can share their current understandings in order to construct the curriculum and then enact it. A useful way to frame the co-planning discussion would be to draw on the curriculum making model (Figure 15.2), in order to consider the geography, the pedagogy and the student experience (GA, 2009; Lambert and Biddulph, 2014). Such a model can ensure that co-planning is focused on developing a shared vision of high quality teaching and learning, represented at the centre of the model shown in Figure 15.2.

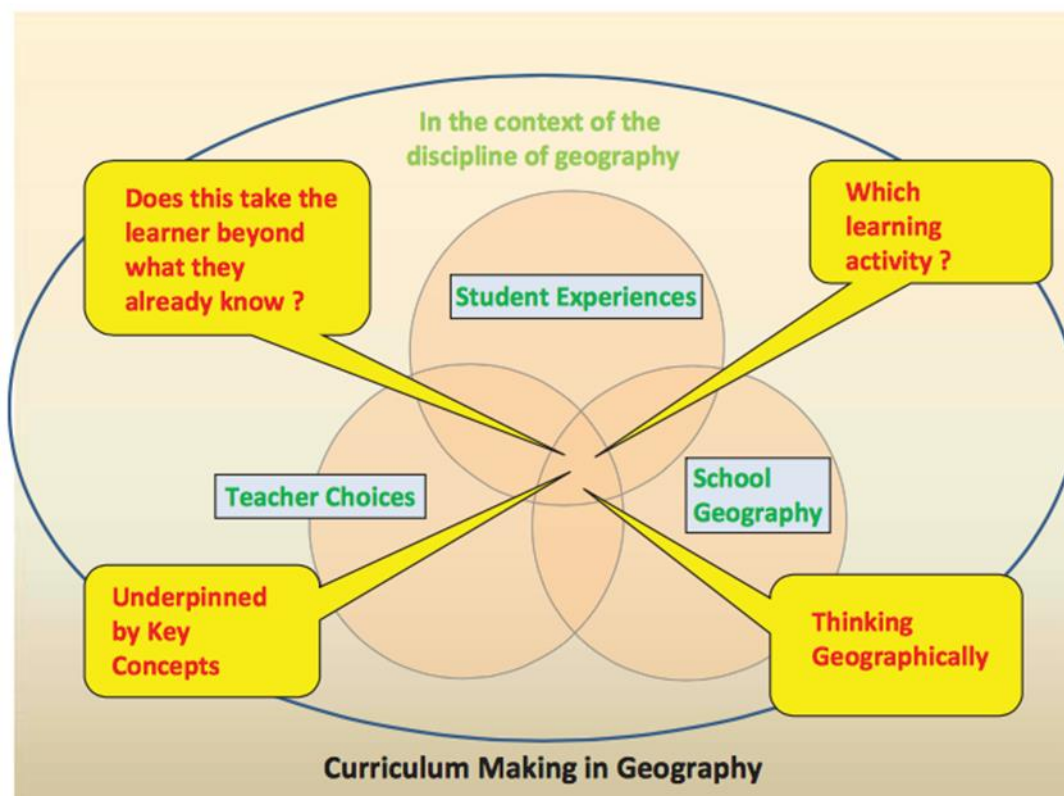


Figure 15.2 Curriculum Making in Geography (Lambert and Biddulph, 2014, p.215)



Using the curriculum making model as a framework, the following questions can be considered as a basis for collaborative planning. These questions are illustrative and there is likely to be a wide range that you might discuss.

- What is development?

This is an essential starting point, linking to the academic discipline and the school geography elements of the curriculum making model. By discussing understandings of a contested concept in geography education, both the mentor and beginning teacher are able to consider their own perspectives and agree on the ideas that can form a shared, inclusive vision of the curriculum. This is important to the development of beginning teachers of geography and a vital part of formulating a professional view of the purpose of geography education. In a beginning teacher's early stage of learning, demonstrating high expectations that teaching geography is an ongoing exploration of the subject helps to create an expansive environment (Table 15.1), normalising discussions focused on the geography being taught and the pedagogical approaches to best support pupil learning. It also reiterates the importance of subject specialist knowledge and understanding in planning a unit, considering deeply the purpose of the subject matter and problematising that knowledge. In this instance, there might be discussions about the different perspectives on development such as postcolonial perspectives of development and criticisms of this (Nash, 2002), indigenous knowledge and the positionality of geographers in relation to this (Radcliffe, 2017; Briggs, 2013) and critical viewpoints of post millennium development goals (Enns et al, 2014; Radcliffe, 2020). A beginning teacher will very likely have more recent engagement with the subject matter in academia, either through university studies or teacher education programmes, enabling deep discussions about the geography in the curriculum, considering how development is constructed for the teachers as well as pupils. Their knowledge of geography positions them as a valued participant in such a conversation, with the capacity to bring new or challenging insights to what has been formalised within particular geography departments. This educative focus for mentor dialogue can enable alternative perspectives (Figure 15.1) on what constitutes an aspect of the geography curriculum – it is essential that these are discussed as a basis for planning what pupils are to learn.

- What are the possible geographical imaginations that pupils bring to the classroom about development?

The term ‘geographical imaginations’ is used here to consider the knowledge and understandings that pupils bring to the classroom derived from media and popular culture. Very often these imaginations can be thought of as ‘common sense’, although might hide a multitude of assumptions (Gregory, 1994, Massey, 2005). These might also be based on their own direct experiences, such as family links with other countries or holidays. Utilising the curriculum making model to structure the discussion, it is important to consider what pupils might already know, and the impact of this knowledge or geographical imagination on how pupils make sense of the geography within the lesson and wider unit. Here the mentor is able to draw on their own experience of teaching pupils, to highlight misconceptions such as homogenous understandings of a place being poor or rich, developed or underdeveloped. The beginning teacher will be able to bring their own encounters with such misconceptions to the conversation. Further discussion might consider the representations across wider curricula which reinforce or challenge such misconceptions, examining the complex web of ideas that pupils bring to the geography classroom and which teachers need to explore with them. The mentor and the beginning teacher can thus draw on the observations and reflections, as well as wider experiences, to co-construct their knowledge and understanding to build ‘knowledge-of-practice’.

- What pedagogical approaches can be tried?

Decisions of pedagogy must be in relation to the above questions about what is being taught, the prior knowledge of pupils and the overall purpose of the unit. If the mentor and beginning teacher are aiming to introduce alternative perspectives on development, enquiry based learning approaches might be appropriate, enabling pupils to utilise a range of geographical data to reach an informed conclusion (Roberts, 2013). However, further discussion might be had about presenting development as a solution-focused issue, situating places through a Western perspective of development mainly focused on economic progress and drives to modernity. For example, decision making activities, such as those featured in GCSE exams where pupils need to justify a particular decision in relation to a given issue, can allow pupils to demonstrate deep geographical thinking (for an example of this, see AQA GCSE Geography Paper 3 – Sample Set 1, available at <https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/geography/AQA-80353-SQP.PDF>). This can also, however, present development as a problem to be solved, consisting of people that need help. Even where small scale, locally driven development projects are studied, there is a Western perspective that might need to be considered, alongside the prominence of indigenous

geographies (Briggs, 2013). Such reflections would directly impact on the types of activities planned, linking the geographical knowledge and the pedagogical decisions. There are no easy answers – that is at the heart of educative mentoring - but such discussions bring benefits for the mentor, beginning teacher and pupil learning.

The next step might be the construction of a sequence of lessons, either in the form of an overall plan or as a set of lesson plans. An educative mentor does not take ‘the more traditional mentoring strategy of correcting and approving lesson plans’ (Barnett and Friedrichsen, 2015, p.655). Instead, there should be encouragement to discuss the rationale behind pedagogical decisions, talking through the plans and engaging in further co-construction.

As a result of this enquiry, a focus can be arrived at for the beginning teacher to observe the mentor teaching, arising from questions of how a critical view of the world can be developed through a particular activity. A next step might be asking the beginning teacher to conduct a focused observation of a mentor’s lesson, based on identifying the choices made by the teacher and the pupils’ responses. This is a good opportunity for the mentee to begin to link their subject knowledge of development to the pedagogical knowledge employed in the classroom. It situates the classroom as a site of enquiry from the outset, problematising practice with a focus on how mentees perceive the pupils are learning about development. This provides a platform for the beginning teacher to contribute to a conversation about teaching the topic, drawing on observations of pupil learning. It provides a perspective that is informed by careful noting of which issues arise in the mentor’s teaching. Such a conversation will allow both the mentor and beginning teacher to discuss and formulate their vision of what good teaching and learning within such a unit can look like. The mentor is able to reflect on their experiences of teaching this topic, allowing them to deconstruct their practice and highlight potential misconceptions that have previously come to light, as well as the particularly effective elements of the unit. In doing so, the mentor is modelling reflective practice, but also needs to invite ideas and considerations from the beginning teacher, which in turn, develops their own practice.

Such steps in educative mentoring are not exclusive to the example of development. Following from co-planning, ideally there would be the opportunity to team teach. This allows both the beginning teacher and the mentor to experience the planning and teaching

processes together, and share reflections on practice and pupil learning, thereby co-constructing ‘knowledge-of-practice’.

### **Task 15.1 Enquiring into teaching about ‘development’: an educative mentoring approach**

Look at the curriculum content and teaching materials provided by your geography department to teach ‘development’ at KS3 or KS4. Design a series of questions that you can use to guide a mentoring conversation with your mentee. Ask your mentee to read the same materials beforehand and think of their own questions about teaching this topic.

Your questions might include:

- What view (s) of development do you think is represented in the materials we use in the department? Which materials suggest that and why?
- How do these ideas compare with how you learned about development at school?
- Is there anything here that is included or left out that surprises you?
- Why do you think development is considered to be such an important focus in the geography curriculum? What is your view on that?
- Which pupil learning activities do you find interesting or challenging? What could you find out about that, through observation?

Following your mentor dialogue about the materials, reflect together on similarities and contrasts in mentor/mentee questions about teaching development and use this to inform shared goals for the beginning teacher as they teach this unit.

*These kinds of questions can be applied to any geography topic that your mentee will be expected to teach.*

### **Observations and post-lesson dialogue**

Lesson observation is recognised as a common strategy to enable the mentor to understand the educational practices of the beginning teacher (Wang, Odell and Schwille, 2008; Healy, Walshe and Dunphy, 2020; Puttick and Warren-Lee, 2020). A key feature of lesson observation is the feedback provided to the beginning teacher after an observation has taken place. However, this can be problematic, as noted by Hobson and Malderez (2013), who

coined the phrase ‘judgementoring’ in order to demonstrate how this practice can inhibit learning opportunities for beginning teachers – and for mentors.

Judgementoring is perhaps most visible in the frequent use by mentors of a restrictive “feedback” strategy in post-lesson discussions, typically involving a mentor-led evaluation of the “positive” then “negative” features of a lesson, followed by suggestions for improvement. (Hobson and Malderez, 2013, p95)

Within educative mentoring, this feedback might be renamed a ‘learning conversation’ or ‘post-lesson dialogue’, in order to shift the emphasis from the expert-novice dynamic to a learning opportunity for both parties. This is exemplified in Hodkinson’s (2009) ‘expansive’ school environment, allowing ideas to be discussed and encouraging mutual teacher learning.

Observation of a beginning teacher should be discussed beforehand to identify a clear focus for what is to be observed. This is another opportunity, before the observation takes place, for the beginning teacher to reflect on their practice and current understanding of how pupils learn geography. This should not be based around competencies, or the performance of the beginning teacher as such. Norman and Feiman-Nemser (2005) argued that the focus of observations should be on pupil learning and understanding, summarising an argument from Dewey (1904/1965)

When observing an experienced teacher, for example, novices should not focus on the teacher’s behaviour in order to “accumulate a store of methods.” Rather they should pay close attention to the way students make sense of what they are studying. (Norman and Feiman-Nemser, 2005, p680).

Focused observations of the beginning teacher can draw on evidence of how pupils are making sense of the geography in the lesson, either using examples of work or observations of pupils during the lesson and their responses to the teaching. This can build up rich evidence of learning that can be analysed in the post-lesson dialogue. Stanulis et al (2019) describe this as ‘getting rid of the kitchen sink to focus on one aspect of effective teaching.’ (p.574).

Post lesson dialogue is far more effective if it is focused on a worthwhile longer term goal which can provide an educative foundation for specific adjustments to practice. An educative goal might be for the mentee to deepen their understanding of the role of prior knowledge in pupils’ learning in geography, learning how to explore this and current (mis)conceptions. It

may be helpful to identify such a goal as an enquiry question that is explored through the mentee's lesson. An enquiry question is one that requires deep consideration, is explored by using a range of evidence within the lesson, and is not focused on simple solutions or finding easy answers. It helps to unravel the complexities of practice, always feeding into ongoing development. Most enquiry questions are never answered fully – they go on informing practice over time. They are questions that mentors might ask of their own practice, as well as the mentee's.

During the lesson the mentor observes the pupils – their spoken and non-spoken reactions, responses to questions, levels of engagement and evidence of learning, in line with the focus/enquiry question agreed beforehand. In the geography classroom, evidence of learning can be elicited in a variety of ways: pupils' writing, responses to teacher questioning, discussion with peers, labelled or annotated diagrams, maps, sorting activities and a range of other means. As the observer, the mentor needs to consider the extent to which pupils are making sense of the geography. This does not take the form of the mentor sitting at the back of the classroom taking notes. Instead, the mentor gets involved with the pupils, asks them questions about what they think they are doing, and looks carefully at the activities they are working on and how well they are making sense of the geography. This can produce a range of reflections from the mentor, which supports post-lesson dialogue based on insights into the pupils' learning. The collection of this rich evidence might be in the form of notes about pupils, observations about their responses, questions they ask and specific pieces of work.

The evidence supports the beginning teacher to reflect on the lesson in a critical way, possibly compiling further notes, using the focus of the observation as a central theme. Post-lesson dialogue becomes an opportunity for beginning teacher and mentor to co-construct knowledge of how pupils learn in the geography classroom. Both bring a perspective to the dialogue, rooted within knowledge-of-practice. Within this dialogue, the mentor avoids offering simple advice such as 'I would have done it this way...'. Instead, the dialogue can focus on the evidence gathered, and how it demonstrates the relationship between the teaching behaviours of the beginning teacher and the pupils' learning. This allows both the mentor and beginning teacher to maintain the relationship of collaborators and co-thinkers, building knowledge and understanding for both.

### **Task 15.2 Observing a lesson: using the classroom as a site of enquiry**

The questions below are examples that could be used as an enquiry question in a focused observation of a geography lesson.

- How is prior knowledge of pupils built upon in the lesson? Are pupils enabled to voice their perspectives in a constructive environment that allows them to be challenged and built upon?
- How does questioning support pupils in understanding the geography?
- How engaged are pupils? What helps engagement for all?
- How are learners' needs met? Are pupils able to engage with the geography in a way that is meaningful for them?
- How do we really know if pupils have achieved the lesson objectives? How reliable is the evidence of learning?
- How is formative assessment used to help the teacher (and pupils) to gain an understanding of pupils' learning?
- How are pupils given the opportunity to make sense of the geography?

This list is not exhaustive and the focus of the observation may require different questions. The key element of the observation should be a focus on pupil learning, leading to a discussion in the post lesson dialogue which unpicks the rich evidence generated through the observation.

During the lesson observation, move around the room and look carefully at how pupils are responding to the teaching. Talk to the pupils about their learning, ask them to share what they are learning with you. Look at the evidence of learning, whether written or verbal. After the lesson observation, take some time to reflect on the learning that you observed and write some reflection notes, linking to the focus enquiry question that was agreed with the beginning teacher. The beginning teacher should also complete a reflection on pupil learning in the same way.

The post-lesson dialogue provides an opportunity for the mentor and beginning teacher to share their perspectives on the learning that has taken place in the lesson, and generate future questions. A possible structure for this might be:

1. Sharing reflections on pupil learning linked to the agreed enquiry question.

2. Examine the evidence of learning – through discussion of pupil responses and written work. What did the pupils learn? How reliable is the evidence of learning?
3. What is the relationship between the beginning teacher’s decisions and the pupil learning?
4. What are the potential answers to the enquiry question?
5. What other questions about practice have been generated through the post lesson dialogue? Which of these should be focused on moving forwards in order to best support pupils’ geographical learning?

### **Collaborative marking**

Marking pupil work in a collaborative way allows the beginning teacher to consider the impact of their teaching on pupil understanding. Equally important, they learn how to respond effectively to pupils’ work in a variety of ways, in order to support further learning. It is also an opportunity for the mentor to consider the quality of the work being assessed, refine their own assessment skills, and consider the assessment practice that best supports learning. We use an example of a Year 8 piece of assessed work, worth six marks in a test, in order to demonstrate how collaborative marking can be an educative mentoring strategy.

**With reference to a place you have studied, explain how human activity can increase the risk of flooding.**

**Due to developments in infrastructure, cities and town, humans may cover over large amounts of ground with concrete, a process known as concreting. Concreting increases surface run off, whilst decreasing infiltration in a particular area. Precipitation will then begin to fill drains and build up in puddles on top of the concrete, which may lead to flooding.**

**Furthermore, another common human activity is cutting down trees, a process called deforestation, which effectively catch water on their leaves and branches. Transpiration, water catching on plants and evaporating, then occurs. However, when trees and other plants are removed for structural development, the precipitation can infiltrate the surface of the ground and this can lead to more surface run off, which may lead to flooding.**

**Figure 15.3 An example of a Year 8 response to an exam style question, at the end of a unit on rivers**



Mentoring around this piece of work might inevitably feature many aspects of an expert-novice relationship, with the mentor holding the ‘answers’ to how to apply a particular mark scheme fairly and consistently. Collaborative marking, however, can have a multiple focus. It can be a learning opportunity for both, considering whether desired outcomes from the unit are evidenced, where any misconceptions may still exist, and a consideration of the impacts of curriculum and pedagogical choices made by the teacher on pupils’ learning. This is about how the mentor and mentee establish an *educative* agenda for their meeting to discuss ‘marking’. Crucially, collaborative marking should feed forward into future practice.

The example in Figure 15.3 is from a pupil described as ‘high prior attaining’. The evidence of geographical understanding that it provides at the end of a unit on rivers can stimulate a number of discussions between the mentor and beginning teacher. However, shorter non-assessed pieces of work might also be used in the same way, and these might come at any point in a sequence of lessons. This process can also be used in line with the post lesson dialogue after an observation, when focusing on rich evidence of pupil learning.

Stanulis et al. (2019) reported that mentors adopting educative mentoring strategies found that analysis of pupil work led to beginning teachers reflecting more deeply on their teaching, as opposed to blaming pupils for poor behaviour or lack of effort. The pupils’ writing in Figure 15.3 demonstrates some understanding of human activity that can increase the risk of flooding, but this is presented in an abstract way, without the contextual example of a place that has been studied. This might be attributed to pupils forgetting to back up their answers, or possibly not paying attention to instructions, despite it being explicit in the question. However, comparison with other pupil responses might identify this as a wider issue, thereby focusing the beginning teacher on how they can develop their teaching in order to support pupil learning rather than adopting a deficit view of the pupils. The inclusion of real places in geography lessons supports pupils’ broadening of contextual knowledge, whilst also enabling them to deepen their understanding of geographical concepts. Analytical discussion of pupil work allows the beginning teacher to reflect on where they have introduced contextual examples, and how activities in the classroom have supported pupils in using examples in their geographical writing. This is also a learning opportunity for the mentor to reconsider routinised assessment practice, evaluating how this is supporting pupil learning and how far

assessment formats are constructed in a way which allows pupils to demonstrate their geographical understanding.

Figure 15.3 also highlights the pupil's use of some key terms related to a drainage basin system, such as 'infiltration' and 'surface run off'. However, the pupil has not clearly made the link between the increased surface run off and the impact on river levels. As a generally high attaining pupil, this may reveal a gap in knowledge and understanding.

Discussion between the beginning teacher and the mentor can open up potential reasons for the gaps in knowledge and understanding presented here. These might be related to the way in which the curriculum is sequenced or the focus of the learning activities. For example, the inclusion of the geographical terms in the pupil work demonstrates that geographical vocabulary has been picked up and is mostly being applied correctly. However, the lack of connection between the processes and the impacts on a river might be due to a lack of linking the processes to a real flood event, restricting opportunities for pupils to apply their understanding to the real world. Is it possible that the case study of flooding used in the unit did not emphasise the link to the processes that had been studied previously?

A mentor conversation based on collaborative marking goes beyond applying a mark scheme and generates further enquiry questions to be used by the beginning teacher and the mentor. Mentor dialogue can probe into the content of the unit and how key concepts such as flooding are presented and taught, possibly seeking further guidance in research and literature. Such discussions between the mentor and beginning teacher are not only useful in demonstrating how to effectively use evidence of pupil learning to consider next steps in teaching, but also powerful for the mentor in thinking about potential curriculum changes and how these might be put in place over the longer term. This allows for both the mentor and beginning teacher to continue to construct knowledge-of-practice, drawing on viewpoints from the geography discipline, as well as providing the opportunity to consider pedagogy. This is not a conversation that waits until beginning teachers are 'competent'. It is the means by which they develop collaborative, enquiring habits that are essential to learning how to become a principled and knowledgeable professional.

## **Conclusion**

The principles and characteristics of educative mentoring discussed in this chapter underpin the continual development of adaptive expertise, for both the mentor and beginning teacher.

The practical examples demonstrate how educative mentoring can be used within activities that are part of many teacher education programmes, as well as whole school systems; for example, see Gu et al.'s (2018) analysis of collaborative planning as professional development within schools. In this way, educative mentoring is not seen as an approach to mentoring only beginning teachers. It can foster a professional learning community within and across departments and across schools, enabling mentors to build skills that can continue to improve the effectiveness of curriculum and pedagogy, with pupil learning at its heart. The model of educative mentoring presented in Figure 15.1 might also be used in co-constructing knowledge-of-practice when used as a reference point for beginning teachers' journal entries, discussing specific developmental areas, such as inclusion, or within regular mentor meetings. Educative mentoring is necessarily unsettling of taken-for-granted ways of doing things. By disrupting traditional expert-novice mentoring relationships, it has the potential to offer transformative learning experiences for both the beginning teacher and the mentor.

### **For discussion**

- What have you learned about teaching and learning through your mentoring role? How did this come about?
- Is your school environment and geography department mostly expansive or restrictive? How do you know this and what changes might be put in place to allow educative mentoring to take place?
- Other than the suggestions in this chapter, how else might you use the classroom as a site of enquiry?

### **Further reading and resources**

1. Langdon, F. and 1. Ward, L. 2015. Educative mentoring: a way forward. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 4 (4), pp. 240-254.

For an overview of educative mentoring, and the theory that underpins it, this article provides an outline of the knowledge, attitudes and skills required for an educative mentor. This is useful to consider your mentoring approach currently and the key changes needed to make it more educative.

2. Stanulis et al., 2019. Mentoring as More Than “Cheerleading”: Looking at Educative Mentoring Practices Through Mentors’ Eyes. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 70(5), pp.567-580.

To consider how educative mentoring changes practice from the perspective of mentors, this article provides case studies with specific changes to mentor practice, outlining the benefits to beginning teachers, mentors and pupils. This is a useful article to consider specific practice based changes in mentoring.

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