Minutes for Meeting of Project Advisory Group

Wednesday 23rd March 2005
1:30pm – 3:30pm
Room C2, Pathfoot Building

Present:
Danny Murphy (Chair), Lisa Bagley, Andrew Burnett, Brian Corbin, Ken Currie, Claire Findlay, Peter Gray, Jim McNally and Phil Swierczek.

Attending:
Lynne Learmonth (Secretary)

1. Apologies
Mairi Breen (HT, Braehead Primary), Peter Cope – will be attending late, Linda Horsburgh (HT, Wallace High School), Lesley Low, Dean Robson (GTC Scotland), John Siraj-Blatchford (TLRP), Ian Stronach (MMU).

2. Introduction – Chair and Project Directors
Danny Murphy (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting. DM felt that he was finding it difficult to come to terms with how fast the project is moving. DM amended the agenda slightly – items 4 and 8 brought together. Smaller groups for items 5, 6 and 7 but due to small attendance will split into 2 groups.

3. Chair’s remarks
Minutes of last meeting approved. DM asked Phil Swierczek for an update on some of the issues that were discussed during the last meeting. PS feels that they are part of the bigger team now. They have noticed that everybody has a different experience. Enjoyed the phase at the moment involving the pupils, asking pupils opinions on a good/bad teacher. PS said that there were very mature responses. All TRs are really enjoying it. Ethical dilemmas came up last time – PS said that confidentiality is paramount, they have kind of got over dilemma of what their role is as they can direct probationer to the right person. NB said that the university has set up a University Ethics Committee. The IoE is in the process of setting up a departmental ethics committee. It has provision for ongoing ethical approval, can get advice and judgment. Any ethical issues can be referred to the departmental ethics committee. DM said the ethics committee might actually learn from the TR’s work that they do. BC said that if the only time the pupils got asked their opinion is during a research project. All the signs are that it is going to work with new teachers but doesn’t want to jump right in.

4. General Update / Annual Report & Report on meeting with Local Authorities
JMcN said that a lot has been happening. The main areas of development have been included in the annual report; it is a reasonable overview of what has been happening. The work done by the TR’s has been a major part of data collection. The individual tales have been captivating. Issues that were there at the start like confidentiality, they all have pseudonyms but times like when TRs are typing up interviews in school - how do they keep it private? Our model is more of a theory; have to get it into a practical language that we can relate to. Job satisfaction questionnaires, 2 different ones for primary and secondary. JMcN showed the abstract diagram of the job sat results so far. The following papers were distributed - Interact and Cepsati papers, internal working paper of intervention paper – insight into the process of the meetings, journal article.
JMcN said that the local authority meeting was very insightful of what people might feel. The intervention is where we are now, with the guidance of this group, we had a meeting with the local authorities on 9th March, we presented what we were trying to do and we got back to them with a paper. We already have 5 schools definitely wanting to be involved and another 5 LA’s wanting to provide schools if possible.

Ken Currie attending the LA meeting and said that it was quite a difficult meeting at times, just people trying to clarify what the roles would be, etc. It was clarified by the end of the meeting; he thought most people were very interested and supportive by the end of it. PC said that it was very helpful to them, helped clarify the methodology. KC felt that the paper was very helpful and may have been the reason why some LA’s got back so quickly.

DM said that there has been a huge amount of work, model is developing, TR issues are moving forward but it’s all not tied down and tidy yet.

5. Model of Early Professional Learning
JMcN discussed the paper on ‘story so far’. Based on the TR data, we propose a model based around 5 distinct but overlapping dimensions: structural dimension, physical dimension (classroom environment, people near them and location of staffroom), social/relational dimension (just talking to other new teachers is very supportive), emotional dimension and cognitive dimension. Ethical/values is not in the model but maybe should be (very personal, personal journey). We haven’t quite finished first phase yet.

PG said that there is a temporal dimension – this really structures the probationers.

BC agrees that this 6th one should play a part in this. LB said that the ethical values should be used on a daily basis. She also thinks that the last one is essential.

CF said that when she was a probationer there were no other art teachers in Stirling Council so during LA days when they were split into subjects for discussion she was left out. She thought that the issues were quite generic but would like this to be a part of this framework.

AB said that moving around the school is not ideal for new teachers. This was a dimension that got to him.

DM said that the cognitive dimension isn’t necessarily cognitive. It might be cognitive to those studying teaching and not actually doing teaching. This model is lacking something, like effective practitioner is a more important factor. BC said that when he was developing the model for Manchester he actually put Practice into this.

PC said that some of the transcripts do relate to practice. They’ve now got enough spare capacity to think about that but at the start there were too many other things going on.

JMcN said that they weren’t too happy with this term – would pedagogy make more sense? LB said that it does overlap with the social and relational, it would be very difficult to measure. PC said that this model is not final. BC said that cognitive is maybe a too behavioural psychologist term.

6. Indicators of New Teacher Development
The meeting then split into 2 areas - PG led the group on the indicators.

PG reported that pupil attainment was the main issue that would be difficult to measure. LB said that they looked at each indicator and it came to light how much progress has been made. She felt that attainment was maybe the wrong word – pupil achievement would be a huge leap of improvement. The subject panel co-ordinators it was suggested that newly qualified teachers could go in to observe.
DM said that the self assessment of teachers – how teachers evaluate their own work is an important key element here.

JMCN said that they are actually moving away from using the word attainment to something like development. Maybe adding in a self-assessment as well without over complicating it.

7. Intervention Plan
Nick Boreham led the group on the intervention plan.

NB reported that the key points were that it was important for us to intervene at the level of school and also local authority. School intervention should be careful to give ownership to those who are responsible for mentoring. KC said that there is a small team in his authority, consisting of 3 primary school teachers, that goes to schools and interviews new teachers and they intervene, similar to what the project will be aiming to do – he suggested we interview them*.

8. Future Meetings
DM said that we could get more value from this group through more regular contact or more access to the team of new teachers. Most PAG members agreed that they would be happy to come after 4pm rather than miss classes.

The following dates were confirmed:-
Specific Purpose Meeting 1 on Indicators – Tuesday 26th April 2005 – 4:30pm – Room B25, Pathfoot Building confirmed
Specific Purpose Meeting 2 on Intervention – Wednesday 11th May 2005 – 4:30pm – Room B29, Pathfoot Building confirmed **

*** Meeting with new teachers involved taking place, so members of PAG will be invited – provisional date Wednesday 25th May 2005, 4pm – Room D2, Pathfoot Building booked.

**** The next Project Advisory Group (Sept/Oct) - date to be circulated.

Any other business
John Siraj-Blatchford, TLRP has taken ill with cancer, he has been replaced by Steve Baron from Strathclyde as our new Associate Director.

Actions:-
* Interview the 3 Primary Teachers from Falkirk Council involved with intervention - KC to provide contact details.
** Circulate rooms booked for Specific Purpose Meetings - LL
*** Circulate dates for New Teacher evening – LL
**** Circulate dates for next PAG meeting – LL