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THE SUBJECT MENTOR IN MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES' TEACHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper comes at a time of curriculum and Initial Teacher Education (ITE) change in England. The need to hold on tightly to many first principles is vital and one of these is the role of the modern foreign languages mentor in schools, in the context of secondary ITE, the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) more specifically. This paper aims to restate the definition of the subject mentor, focusing on the qualities, the complexity and evolution of the role. A theoretical framework has been developed based on the theory of mentoring and associated concepts of reflective practice and professional dialogical relationships. Theory and practice of mentoring are then supported with a small-scale research study based on open-ended questionnaires to subject mentors of PGCE Modern Foreign Languages (MFL). The paper also explores the type of collaboration that subject mentors would appreciate having with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and observes whether the subject mentoring role in MFL is changing as a result of government policy changes.

Keywords: subject mentor, modern foreign languages (MFL), mentoring, ITE, PGCE.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last 20 years, the nature of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in England has witnessed much change, during which the "emphasis on school practical experience as a major part of the trainees' curriculum time' started (Heilbronn, 2008, p.15). Subsequently, the debate arose on as to who is to have the main responsibility for Initial Teacher Education and the preparation of new student teachers (STs) for the teaching profession: Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) or schools.

HEIs have had up until recently a central role to play in Teacher Education, nurturing and preparing STs for the teaching profession through the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme. During the PGCE year, time is divided between attending lectures in HEIs and completing two school placements. This dual process allows a very gradual initiation into teaching, prepares STs to become critical thinkers and permits them to familiarise with educational theory and the realities of

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what it actually means to be a teacher. STs eventually graduate with a double bonus: Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) which is a set of standards that every qualified teacher must meet in order to be eligible to teach in England, and masters credits gained through academic assignment work and which can vary amongst different HEIs. The main aim of writing assignments for student teachers is to reflect critically upon their own practice; articulate what they are observing and what they are asked to teach; academic assignments, in this light, help student teachers to progress in their own practice. Students can use their masters' credits to pursue further studies, should they wish to do so.

The partnership between HEIs and schools involves a group of experts all working in their different roles to support the development of the student teacher: the HEI subject tutor, the school subject mentor (SM) (i.e. languages) and the professional coordinating mentor (PCM), who oversees the more generic professional development needs of a student teacher, such as discussing different types of policy - behaviour management policy, safeguarding and child protection policy, inclusion policy- to name but a few. Therefore, the mechanisms of support in the developmental process of becoming a qualified teacher through a PGCE programme are strong in subject-specific input from both HEI tutor and school SM and equally strong in terms of a more generic input from the PCM in school and the generic lectures that all student teachers receive as part of their professional studies programme with an HEI.

However, the balance between a strong subject specific input and a more generic input has radically changed with the introduction from the current government of three further school-based Initial Teacher Training routes: School Direct (with two choices: Salaried or Non-Salaried), School-Centred Initial Teacher Training and Teach First (DFE, 2015).

In the newly introduced teacher training models, schools are asked to play the central role in the training process and outcomes for STs. There is, therefore, a significant shift from Initial Teacher Education (ITE) led by HEI's, to Initial Teacher Training (ITT) led by schools, which also leads into a change in terminology, for the purposes of this introduction, from student teachers to trainee teachers. Trainee teachers, hence, find themselves teaching from day one in a school of their choice and mainly learning on the job, through the process of trial and error. This reality has implications for the mechanisms that are put into place to support the trainee teachers. In all three school-based models the HEI tutor specific input is diminished or is absent, the role of the subject specific mentor (SM) is not formalised or is totally absent. It has been replaced by a senior member of the school team who may or may not be familiar with the subject specific pedagogy and therefore when observing a trainee teacher, the only aspect that can actually be commented upon is behaviour management policies and how well or not they have been applied. It seems then that the introduction of new school-based models completely disregards the value of subject specific input that has been put into place so thoughtfully in the first place; input which allowed student teachers to be gradually nurtured into the profession.

Changes in teachers' standards

In the newly introduced Teaching Standards in England (DFE, 2015), a significant absence of subject pedagogy is observed when compared with the old teaching standards (TDA, 2007). In the old teaching standards, the first part of the section on subjects and curriculum was: 'Q14: Have a secure knowledge and understanding of

their subjects/curriculum areas and related pedagogy to enable them to teach effectively across the age and ability range for which they are trained. […]' (TDA 2007, p. 9)

In the new teaching standards subject pedagogy is absent and the first part on subjects and curriculum knowledge, is now worded as such: 'Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge: have a secure knowledge of the relevant subject(s) and curriculum areas, foster and maintain pupils' interest in the subject, and address misunderstandings [...]' (DFE, 2015, p. 11). From the latter comparison it is evident that subject pedagogy is no longer prominent, and professionals involved directly in the process of nurturing subject pedagogy, with student teachers, such as subject mentors, are to find their role significantly disadvantaged.

In this context, I aim to restate the qualities, the complexities of a subject mentor in Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) and observe the specific challenges that they face. The necessity to hold on to the role for the purposes of preparing reflective language teachers is vital and also exploring new types of collaboration between HEIs and Schools is also very relevant, due to the swiftly changing climate in education policy in England.

In an attempt to restate the distinctiveness of the subject mentor role during a period of radical restructuring of initial teacher education, I will engage mainly with the theory of mentoring and associated concepts of reflective practice and professional dialogical relationships, less with the theory of subject mentoring; there is a paucity of published research to be observed around subject mentoring and subject pedagogy, due to the fact that the process of mentoring in subject areas is a private exchange between a mentor and a mentee, deeply rooted in practice, with practically no official quantifiable evidence for the direct impact of mentoring on the student teachers' development (Hobson et al, 2009).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The definition of the 'mentor' is adopted from Feiman-Nemser, Parker (1992) who state that: 'the promise of mentoring lies not in its contribution to novices' emotional well-being or survival, but in its capacity to foster an inquiring stance towards teaching and a commitment to developing shared standards for judging good practice', elements of practice which 'clearly state a transition from a classroom teacher to a teacher educator' as explored in Dobbins and Walsey (1992, p. 7). In this respect, a mentor is more than a classroom teacher; it is someone with the ability to critically reflect upon and capture the essence of learning how to teach and with the ability to share their knowledge with the STs during the mentoring process. It is implied that a subject mentor needs to be an expert in their subject area as well as an experienced teacher. Their role is to induct the student teacher into the practice of teaching, imparting expert knowledge of pedagogy in that particular subject. The entire process cannot be completely undertaken by a generic mentor who deals with no subject specific pedagogy.

Subsequently, the process of mentoring is deeply rooted in a 'collaborative learning experience' (Parker-Katz & Bay, 2008, p. 1260) between a mentor and a mentee, between an experienced teacher and a student teacher.

Part of the collaborative learning process would be to enter into some kind of relationship. A well-grounded reflective relationship (Furlong, Maynard, 1995) would

be welcomed within which a fruitful dialogue could take place and allow the student teacher to evaluate and interpret subject pedagogy: 'The discourse of subject pedagogy is engaged with when the student teacher makes connections between his sense of the ways in which interpretations are constructed and the method used to teach the pupils' (Arthur, Davison, Moss, 1997, p. 132). Through a transactional activity and conversation with their subject mentor, student teachers could eventually start making sense of what they observe, start forming evaluations on a specific teaching episode with the optimum aim to internalise their own practice (Schön, 1983); It is only then that their own 'development of teacher knowledge and understanding' (Heilbronn, 2008, p. 115) can actually start taking place successfully.

As the developmental process takes place on the basis of a continuous professional dialogue and a 'learning conversation' (Boud et al., 1985, p. 92) the subject mentor should allow the student teacher to articulate her/his own experiences and identify new qualities in her/his teaching personality. According to Boud et al (1985), this can be achieved through three very distinctive stages: the stage of 'mirroring' whereby the subject mentors' feedback, needs to be 'specific' 'behavioural' and 'non-interpretative'. The next stage is for the subject mentor to 'deal with the emotional context of learning' whereby a supportive relationship is to be built, which aids the student teacher through the period of learning. Finally, the last stage and the most difficult one, is to allow the student teacher to 'articulate new dimensions of quality', meaning, allowing the student teacher to reflect upon their practice and help the student reach a new level of independence in her/his teaching practice.

Considering the above theoretical framework as a 'journey' which starts from self-discovery and leads to independence, I sought to support the theory and practice of mentoring with a small-scale research study. I used open-ended questionnaires addressed to Subject Mentors in Modern Foreign Languages, in the hope that by presenting their own views and giving them a strong voice, I will persuade the reader that the subject mentor is a vital role in the process of educating new student teachers into the profession and one that needs to remain.

METHODOLOGY

The small-scale study was conducted through open-ended questionnaires for two reasons: firstly, because I believe that 'reality is socially constructed' (Robson, 2002, p. 27) and secondly that 'meaning does not exist in its own right; it is constructed by human beings as they interact and engage in interpretation' (Robson, 2011, p. 24). Hence, the choice of gathering data through open-ended questionnaires in order to allow subject mentors to express their opinion and interpret the reality freely. I recognise however that 'participants' accounts can lack validity or credibility' (Hobson et al. 2009, p. 213) for the very true reason that 'participants have a tendency, […] to seek to present themselves in a favourable light' (Dingwall, 1997 discussed in Hobson et al., 2009, p. 213).

Questionnaires

1. According to your experience, what are the qualities of a good subject mentor specifically in Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)? (Please give reasons)
2. How is the role of the subject mentor in MFL particularly complex (in comparison with other disciplines)?

3. In this ever-changing climate for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) with a range of teacher education and teacher training models (School Direct -salaried and non- salaried route, Teach First, PGCE), what kind of collaboration would you appreciate taking place between Training and School providers?
4. As a consequence of the changes in ITE do you think that the demands on the role of the subject mentor in MFL are changing? If yes then how?

The open-ended questionnaires were distributed in two different ways: Firstly, to twenty subject mentors attending a mentor training day for the PGCE Modern Foreign Languages course on which I am a tutor and secondly the questionnaires were sent via email to twenty subject mentors with whom the entire PGCE Modern Foreign Languages team works.

As background to the study, in the first context, during the mentor training day, the day was split into two halves whereby in the morning session the novice subject mentors attended and in the afternoon session they were joined by the more experienced mentors. Out of twenty attendees only five were men, and all between the ages of 25 and 55. Their teaching experience varied from 3 to 20 years and the mentoring experience from first timers to 10 or more years of experience. The questionnaires were distributed at the end of the mentor training day for everyone to complete, which made the sampling representative of both novice and experienced mentors. Participation in the questionnaire was optional and anonymous. A total of eleven questionnaires was handed back in at the end, and by a mix of novice and more experienced subject mentors.

In the second context, where the questionnaire was sent via email, the only criterion for the selection of recipients was mentors who are currently working with PGCE Languages student teachers. The selection of the recipients was made at random and by using contact details of email addresses provided in the timetables that student teachers have submitted to their University tutors on the online platform Moodle. I sent twenty email-questionnaires and got three back. All three subject mentors were asked whether they wished to be named, as I sent the questionnaires to their personal email addresses; two out of the three subject mentors wished to be named (please see acknowledgements).

All the answers collected from the mentor day and the ones from the email questionnaires, were coded with numbers between 1 and 14. The answers were of an open-ended nature, the informants had the choice to write mono-lexically or provide answers in full prose. The majority of the informants did indeed take the time to write in full prose. This meant that an answer of similar content was written in many different ways. I then undertook the task of categorising similar answers together, 'open-coding' (Robson 2011, p. 149) with the aim to 'include responses that are similar in nature' (Robson 1993, p. 253), under one theme. This task was completed as read through the responses. The discussion of findings that follows is 'driven by the nature of the responses and the themes and dimensions they suggest' (Robson 1993, p. 253).

Finally, I am fully aware that this is a very small-scale research study and generalisations cannot be made. However, I am hoping to shed some light into the complexities of subject mentoring in modern foreign languages.

RESULTS

According to your experience, what are the qualities of a good subject mentor specifically in Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)?

The experienced teacher

There is a consensus from the responses for the need of extensive experience. Experience is measured in many different ways: experience from teaching in different learning environments, experience from extended time spent in a specific learning environment and experience measured against the nature of advice given to students in relation to any issues they may have; advice which will eventually allow a student teacher to develop in a specific school placement and prepare them for the next.

The notion of experience is also associated with maturity and acceptance of new ideas. It is about learning to share the experience and good practice acquired over the years. At the same time the SM should welcome new ideas and not dismiss them. An experienced subject mentor will know how to accept and use new ideas in order to develop his/her own practice with an open mind so that she/he does not impose a certain way of teaching on STs when it is not the only way.

Finally, an experienced subject mentor should also be able to keep up to date with new developments, work within the school training scheme so that the routines, systems, support, training opportunities given to student teachers are robust.

Quality of mentoring skills

A key component is the quality of mentoring skills which is interpreted in several ways: the ability to draw out answers from the student teacher and the ability to be able to provide solutions to problems; to create the right circumstances for the student teacher in order for her/him to be able to experiment with a variety of approaches and for her/him to observe the application of theory in the classroom. Finally, to allow the student teacher to do all the above in their own style, to allow them to experiment as opposed to giving answers.

An important skill needed to achieve all of the above is honesty, a good subjective knowledge of where the SM is and the ability to be objective within the faculty, school and national scheme. An SM should also be honest about their own practice and always say 'I make mistakes and I sometimes shout' then explain why it is important to be honest and highlight the fact that there is never a right way or right answer.

A vital skill highlighted in the answers is patience in many respects: making time where there is none, letting the trainee explore different approaches, identifying the fact that it is their time to experiment and listening to the problems the student teachers may face.

Subject knowledge and pedagogy

Part of the basic subject knowledge needs in MFL, is the competence in language skills. It is acknowledged from the responses that all Subject Mentors have different linguistic backgrounds and competences, but the teaching and learning needs to encompass neither too much academic linguistic knowledge nor weaker skills in the second language. Student teachers need someone who can lead by example, someone who is realistic and challenging the ST to improve in their subject knowledge and subject pedagogy.

Specifically in MFL a subject mentor should be prepared to spend enough time with the ST looking at lesson plans and focusing on the children's learning not just on the ST's teaching, therefore a mentor is to be confident in their subject knowledge both of the language and teaching, show willingness to help and be enthusiastic as s/he would be about her/his subject area with a class of students! The ability to provide constructive, detailed productive feedback and encourage reflection to student teachers forms a vital component of subject knowledge and pedagogy.

The lesson planning and evaluation cycle is an aspect that a student teacher in MFL should gradually develop in their practice. For the latter to take place effectively the student teacher needs a SM who knows what works in class.

Emotional support and intelligence

Another quality of a good mentor, as highlighted in the responses, is someone who serves as an emotional support for student teachers, someone who can establish a supportive relationship and is able to spend time advising the ST, giving constructive advice. Part of the emotional support is also giving praise for things well done, or attempted.

A good subject mentor is also someone who can give empathy and someone who understands that many STs, are under pressure in the new environment and career field. The latter, emphasises the idiosyncrasy of the MFL subject mentoring where Student Teachers may be either career changers or new comers in the country. Moreover, the importance of emotional intelligence is interpreted by focusing holistically on a student as if they were an integral part of the faculty, seeking out practical issues (e.g. child care, travel, weakness in the second language) and providing support where necessary within the school policies/framework.

Assessing teaching practice

Finally assessing teaching practice is also identified as one of the roles of the subject mentor. It is stated in the responses that the assessment is needed as it will help the ST to develop as a classroom practitioner.

How is the role of the subject mentor in MFL particularly complex (in comparison with other disciplines)?

The second question was aimed to further explore the qualities of the subject mentor but more specifically to show the added complexity of what it means to be a subject mentor in Modern Foreign Languages, what is distinct from other subject areas, and what are the challenges that subject mentors face with MFL student teachers.

Nurture the quality of subject knowledge and subject pedagogy

As highlighted in the responses, one of the major complexities in MFL is the quality of subject knowledge. The challenge is either more or less defined in the first place by the quality of the subject knowledge that a student teacher brings. Additionally, to what subject knowledge was stated to be in the section above, in this section subject knowledge is associated to subject pedagogy. In this respect a very specific kind of subject knowledge and pedagogy is recognised that a student teacher in MFL needs to have. Pachler and Redondo summarise it as such -and it reflects exactly what the

participants think too- : 'a high level of proficiency in the [Target Language] TL, good structural knowledge as well as the ability to make effective use of the TL, wide ranging awareness of the culture(s) of the countries where the TL is spoken, some knowledge of the linguistic theories underpinning the language learning/acquisition process as well as a familiarity with the respective statutory framework and related documents. It also comprises knowledge and the ability to make effective use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in the specific subject, i.e. to apply ICT appropriately to the benefit of learners in MFL' (Pachler, Redondo, 2009, p. 33).

From the responses and the definition provided, the quality of subject knowledge in MFL extends to the knowledge of the syllabus and the concept of progression within; fact which emphasises the need to help the student teacher familiarise themselves with the syllabus and guide them in making sense of the programme of study; helping them in planning a series of lessons and allowing them to think in the context of medium term planning, rather than planning for individual lessons only is vital; this way the student teacher can see the bigger picture and gradually mature in her/his practice.

Finally, responses revealed that most student teachers also go into their school placements offering two languages and with a variable level of proficiency in both. It is possible but rare to have a high level of proficiency in both languages. Therefore, helping the student teacher to realise and even develop their confidence in their second language falls upon the subject mentor. Student teachers are capable, but not necessarily confident. It is, hence, the responsibility of the subject mentor to offer opportunities for the student teacher to apply and develop their subject knowledge in practice.

Help with planning and teaching the four skills

According to the answers provided, the subject mentor needs to help with planning and teaching well-structured lessons including all four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The idea of dealing with different skills adds also to the complexity of the behaviour management in the classroom, as when working across the four skills, one has to recognise that there are a lot of transition moments where a teacher can "lose" the students. Equally managing a classroom where talking and dialogue are integral to learning can prove to be a challenge, especially when you have a school and departmental policy on silence!

An element that has evolved over the years is the student-centred teaching approach requiring a different kind of planning and teaching by creating various short activities for all four skills and in consequence there is the need for a different kind of mentoring that reflects the specific knowledge in pedagogy for MFL.

Motivating MFL students

Answers revealed that a student teacher should learn how to set the ball rolling and keep it rolling, without losing the students' attention and motivation and by her/him being the only language experts in the classroom.

As a consequence of the reality in MFL classrooms, it is the role of the subject mentor to nurture ways for the student teacher in how to keep the learners engaged at all times, as the sole source of the target language. The need for a subject mentor to share with the ST their expertise on how to keep the students motivated through a variety of activities is of paramount importance here. The need to know the learners in

order to adapt the teaching according to their needs is an important piece of information that initially the SM holds, and it is the SM's duty to transmit this knowledge to the Student Teacher.

According to the responses MFL is also particular in the sense that the student teacher needs to learn to teach very active, very engaging lessons without becoming exhausted! It is quite a different challenge from other subjects and an additional one. To learn to perform effectively, takes a lot of commitment and guidance from the subject mentor. There is evidently the issue of pressure to perform and the added pressure to motivate students to choose languages for GCSE (15-16 years old) and A-level (17-18 years old) as MFL is not compulsory in England after the age of 14. Finally, the subject mentor must guide the student teacher to find the way of making key terms clear, as well as the application of languages in the adult world – while still making it enjoyable and reachable to all students, of differing abilities. The subject mentor is a role model and should indicate ways to do all of the above and help the student teacher to learn and manage the workload.

The use of Target Language (TL) in the classroom

Another key facet in MFL is the use of Target language (TL) in the classroom where, according to the responses, the subject mentor needs to guide the student teacher to be diagnostic about the appropriate use of TL in relation to teaching and learning. Profiles differ from student teachers with a native command of the Target Language taught, who tend to use too much, to those who are not confident enough and who do not use it at all. The role of the subject mentor is to ensure judicious target language use for the specific context.

Cultural awareness

Cultural awareness is finally a big issue according to the answers given, as in MFL, student teachers do come from different parts of the world and that comes with its complexities in relation to the acculturation process, the use of professional English, the time they would need to familiarise themselves with the English education system and also to challenge in some cases their beliefs and established routines.

Sometimes, it is more difficult for student teachers from other countries to fully understand the system they work in and to adapt their language to the requirements of the curriculum, to be more child centred rather than subject focussed, and to look at discipline as not the key focus, that good quality teaching will mean that pupils will need to be motivated and co-operate.

In this ever-changing climate for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) with a range of teacher education and teacher training models (School Direct - salaried and non- salaried route, Teach First, PGCE), what kind of collaboration would you appreciate taking place between Training and School providers?

In this section I synthesize and discuss the responses from the third question on possible collaboration models between HEIs and schools. Three facets emerge: One, that schools are very busy places and they appreciate the partnership as it currently is, two, they highlight the never-ending pressure of time and that they cannot be asked

to undertake more than they are already doing but three that they would welcome on line collaboration systems to be set up by HEIs.

According to the responses, HEIs provide lots of practical and theoretical support to PGCE student teachers, more than any other route, which is an advantage. At the same time schools have also the expertise to train student teachers, through the medium of established subject mentors. The methodology and collaborative work should be organised via the HEIs and the school. Subject mentors appreciate meeting the HEI tutors in lesson observations to discuss the lesson and to share methodology. This gives the student teacher confidence in the partnership. However, the reality is that schools are busy places, and therefore it is stated that there is no time to develop collaborative work beyond the subject mentor role.

Finally, as face to face meetings between HEIs and schools become increasingly difficult, what would be really useful would be to set up forums and blogs through online media facilities. HEI educators and subject mentors in school can then have a common platform for sharing ideas for best teaching practice, sharing methodology, engaging in more meaningful discussions and sharing pedagogy and resources.

As a consequence of the changes in ITE do you think that the demands on the role of the subject mentor in MFL are changing? If yes then how? Is the Subject Mentor role evolving?

I finally asked subject mentors whether they see their role evolving as part of the changing landscape. The responses and thoughts very much vary according to school context and circumstances, which make the results a very mixed landscape.

Some believe that the subject mentor role is not changing because a good subject mentor always makes sure that the priority is the pupils' and student teachers' needs, so they believe that changes in the ITE would not affect this. Also, the focus on basic principles and the role of the subject mentor still remain no matter what changes are to come. The aim is to help the ST to become a competent teacher in the MFL classroom, no matter which standards are in place. There will always be changes, but the basic principles do not change.

Some believe that the role of the subject mentor is evolving as the role of the teacher does in the current climate, influenced by the changes in the curriculum for MFL in England and the demands on the teachers to change their way of planning and teaching. That is to say, as the role of languages changes in the curriculum – to be included in the E-bacc (newly introduced performance measure that students undertake at the age of 16, please see DFE, 2014), is changing how many lessons per week students have each language course – the role of the MFL teacher will continue to change as well. They become more involved with planning trips to immerse students in culture and finding ways to elicit target language from Year 7 up to A-level. The subject mentor needs to be prepared to assist student teachers in discovering the nuances when teaching pronunciation, writing, reading and listening. Striking a balance between fun and effective learning strategies, the SM must be prepared to help the ST on giving her/him ideas on how to make the language come alive and simultaneously be easily memorised.

Some fear the introduction of further school-based routes. If more teacher training models are introduced within a department, then the landscape would become more demanding, but if they continue to take student teachers who are following the

traditional route of a PGCE with a university then they do not see that the role will change very much.

Another problematic issue is that the role of the subject mentor is an addition to the existing workload which means that they are not allocated adequate time to operate in the role of the subject mentor, so it results in more work for them. Normally, a subject mentor should be given an hour a week in their timetable to be able to meet with their student teacher weekly. As this is not always the case across all boroughs and schools, subject mentors find themselves using personal non-contact time.

CONCLUSION

This paper may be set in the English context but the attributes and complexities of the subject mentor in MFL are applicable wherever there is a learning how to teach programme in Languages in any context and under whatever label. I hope to have persuaded the reader on the qualities, the complexity of the subject mentor role in MFL, the pressures that they face and the need to maintain the role in this ever-changing climate. I also hope to encourage further study in the area of subject mentoring and pedagogy and I hope that this attempt will generate many more.

There are indeed a lot of changes surrounding education at the moment in England (changes in teacher education, changes in qualifications, changes in teaching standards) and schools and teachers in schools are very much at the receiving end of those changes. From the responses provided mainly in the third question, however busy and under pressure schools may be, subject mentors welcome and need collaboration models between HEIs and school departments in order to nurture a shared methodology and pedagogy.

The qualities and complexities of the role of the subject mentor in MFL have a direct impact on educating future teachers of languages. They are the ones who shape and nurture their students' teaching personalities. As things are changing towards a school - based model and new policies do not recognise the need for subject pedagogy, there is not a better time to reaffirm the qualities, the complexity and the distinctiveness of the subject mentor role in MFL.

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