

The role of the Initial Teacher Training Coordinator in the school based element of partnership: to what extent does the Co-ordinator undertake supervision of aspects of quality assurance?

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The role of the Initial Teacher Training Coordinator in the school based element of partnership. To what extent does the Co-ordinator undertake supervision of aspects of quality assurance?

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Background to Partnership

Since the early 1980's British Government policy for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) has focussed on re-designing the relationship between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and schools. This has resulted in the requirement for all ITE courses to achieve a closer integration between the HEI and school based elements of their programmes and the need for a formal role for schools and teachers in ITE. (DES, 1984; 1989; DFE, 1992; 1993). This model of integration was seen as offering enriching opportunities for school and HEIs (Furlong et al, 1988; Benton et al,1990). It offered the possibilities to more clearly identify and value the specific contributions from schools and those of HEIs in ITE and consider more carefully the ways in which school-based teaching could be integrated into HEI programmes. Previously, HEIs had considerable autonomy on how this integration was to be achieved. However, in 1992 one model in particular was prescribed: integration should be achieved through a *Partnership* between HEI and schools/colleges (DFE, 1992; 1993 a) where schools would exercise

' joint responsibility for the planning and management of courses and the selection, training and assessment of students'
(DFE, 1992; para 14).

This placed schools very much at the centre of Initial Teacher Education.

Over the last 14 years, Universities and colleges have organised school placements and award qualifications whilst teachers, acting as mentors take the lead in guiding, supervising and assessing students on lengthy teaching placements and ' do all the work' (Fish, 1995). Therefore, Partnership was developed quickly in response to legislation according to each institutions aims, philosophies and against a backcloth of difficulties: little consultation and caution from professional associations in relation to workload of teachers.

However, the mandatory requirement to engage in partnership was placed on HEIs only, with schools choosing whether, when and how to engage in ITE.

In 2002, *Qualifying To Teach* guidelines included 'The Management of the Partnership' as a separate requirement in its own right for the first time with this aspect of ITE provision to be formally inspected by OFSTED (the Inspection and Regulation Service for the government). HEIs became responsible for the quality assurance of school based provision.

The 1994 Education Act was another significant landmark in ITE Partnership. It marked the formal separation of the ITE system from the rest of Higher Education (Shaw,1992). Following this, all funding and requirements for ITE courses became the responsibility of the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) and the recommendation for the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) was no longer the sole remit of HEI providers. This has had a number of ramifications for partnership; namely the way schools have come to rethink their role in educating new teachers and have become increasingly confident in that role. This has also

been reinforced by schools' responsibilities in mentoring and assessing NQTs against the QTS Standards.

Whilst little has changed in the conceptualisation of Partnership in the last 10 years (UCET, 2004) successive governments have since pursued an aggressive role in promoting schools as providing a 'lead' (rather than joint) role in Initial Teacher Education. This has included introducing a variety of schemes leading to the award of QTS through a programme of mainly school-based training (SCITTS and GTP schemes, for example) (DfES 2001, TTA & DfES, 2002). A number of other schemes have also been introduced to give schools a more leading position in ITE, including Training Schools, Partnership Promotion schools and Partnership Development Schools. One of the key aims of these initiatives has been to heighten the central importance of the school based element, increasing capacity for ITE training through the promotion of new routes as well as improving quality of placements.

Whether a school has been involved in a traditional partnership with a University or selected as a Training School or Partnership Development School, this sends a clear message to schools that they are expected to be centre stage in Initial Teacher Education.

Furlong et al (2000) identifies two 'ideal types' of partnership in ITT namely **complementary** (where each partner performs a separate and distinct role, which when added together provides suitable experience for the student teacher) and **collaborative** (where the expertise from both school and university staff is merged together in all aspects). However, it emerged from their own studies of ITT in England that neither of these models of partnership was the most common practice - which was in fact an HEI led model. Despite acknowledging that in some instances this approach is adopted for principled or pragmatic reasons they argue it is largely 'driven by concerns over quality control'. More recently, Smith et al (2006) reviewed a variety of partnership models including collaborative, HEI-based, complementary and HEI-led. Essentially Smith et al argue that despite the popular call for there to be 'truly collaborative' partnerships the reality is that they are 'more likely to remain unachievable than achieved'. This, they assert, is principally because of the existing attitudes of school staff and the limited resources that governments have to date been prepared to invest in ITT.

Many countries have not adopted a mixed model of partnership. For example, a 'distinctive feature' of Scottish provision is that all of its ITE provision is HEI led. This is said to reflect the 'extent to which, in Scotland, teaching has been established as an all graduate profession with academic status' (Brisard et al, 2005).

The development of *partnership* in England has been substantial but there is still a range of political, professional, educational pressures and considerations that need to be managed and so it remains an imprecise and problematic notion (Bines, H., Weldon J., 1995). Further, it is a significantly more expensive model for ITE than previous models, both for schools and HEIs. No real comparative costing has ever been done and even if it were it carries the risk that each partner's contribution would be financially unviable. (Bassett, 2003).

The current model of Partnership carries no implication of equality and there are a number of issues that have remained problematic nationally. These include

- schools being able to chose the scale of their involvement or none at all
- the cost of managing the operation and quality assurance of partnership for the HEI
- the cost of managing the operation and quality assurance of partnership for the school
- how payments are divided fairly

- the extent to which it is reasonable to expect practicing teachers in schools to engage in the various levels of tutoring required
- the issue of teachers being given/finding time to mentor
- how quality can be effectively monitored and controlled by schools and HEI
- the contributions of schools and HEI in the 'integrated' training package
- schools and HEIs reconciling different organisational structure, processes and roles
- developing effective ways of communication

Sheffield Hallam University was among the first of the Universities to 'sign up' to the new partnership model in 1992 and as provision has grown so it has been grappling with these issues. In the recent 2005 Secondary ITE Ofsted Inspection at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) Partnership was identified as a key strength. The Secondary Programme (which is the focus of this paper) from a variety of routes (GTP, flexible and full time). The full time trainees undertake two block teaching placements each throughout the Yorkshire and Humberside region as well as the East Midlands. There are 200 schools in partnership with SHU and therefore quality assurance is a key focus. Considerable resource has been put in to quality assure the provision for ITE within individual schools, across the partnership and across different subjects.

School-based provision is subjected to considerable scrutiny as part of SHU Quality Assurance procedures. All students have a trained mentor and are placed in a department and school selected according to our criteria. Roles and responsibilities are written as part of the Secondary Partnership Agreement Handbook and this is supported by separate subject handbooks. Mentors influence, monitor and assess the progress of trainees and their judgements are moderated by a University subject tutor. In most subjects the University tutor generally has a stable team of mentors. The University works with mentors to ensure a high quality provision. In addition to written guidance this normally takes the form of two visits to mentors/students in their school and a half day review meeting of all the subject mentors. These arrangements are in response to financial considerations as well as TTA Requirements. A current concern is how to ensure quality provision is being further supported and developed from within the school as well as without. In every school there is a senior teacher who co-ordinates the ITE process, liaises with the HEI, and offers support to the mentors and students as well. This person is known in the SHU Partnership as the Senior Liaison Tutor (SLT).

The Senior Liaison Tutor (SLT) takes responsibility for co-coordinating the overall placement experience and assessment programme of trainees on placement. The SLT takes responsibility within their institution for ensuring that the trainee experience supports the work of the institution and for managing any internal matters that arise as a direct result of the placement. The SLT takes on a key role within the programmed for ensuring the appropriateness and quality of the trainee experience whilst on placement. Within the programme the SLT is responsible through the headteacher/institutional head to the Assistant Director (ITE) at Sheffield Hallam University for ensuring that the terms of the partnership agreement are fulfilled.

Secondary Partnership Agreement Handbook (2005)

The Partnership Survey 2006 reported on in this paper has focussed on the Senior Liaison Tutor with a view to finding out their views on their role, and perceived contributions to the quality assurance of the partnership. The survey focussed on some of the key issues identified in previous studies and meetings of the Partnership Management Board. The survey results

were explored in the annual SLT meeting this year (July 2006). These meetings - which were held regionally - also provided opportunities to explore examples of good practice in schools and for the exchange of documentation.

Issues arising from the literature

In most HEI/school partnerships there are two categories of mentors: the subject or class mentor and the (usually senior) staff member who is responsible for Initial Teacher Training throughout the school - at SHU this is called the SLT. While there is a substantial literature on the role of the mentor, the link tutor from the HEI (SHU uses the term moderator) (Field and Philpott, 1998) and trainees experiences of the mentoring process (Hobson 2002) there is very little about the role of the School Liaison Tutor (SLT). This role has a variety of names within different partnerships. In Wales the role holder is often called the Senior Mentor (HEFCW, 2004). Others, for example, Capel (2003) use the term *Professional Mentor* as the person in the school who takes a co-ordinating role for ITE, liaises with the HEI and usually oversees the work of subject mentors. There is general agreement as to what the role entails - firstly a detailed knowledge of procedures used in ITE training, usually from more than one HEI or route so they can advise and support both mentors and trainees. They need to have an overview of training opportunities within and external to the school and the necessary status to be able to engage school staff at all levels in the training process. This means that the role has both a management and a leadership dimension. It is sometimes combined with other cognate roles for example, Induction (first year of teaching) and the co ordination of CPD. In many schools the role holder is part of the School Leadership Team. The role also has a mentoring dimension - to support subject mentors - many of whom are undertaking the role for the first time.

Previous studies (Brookes et al, 1997) have found that subject mentors see themselves mainly helping the trainee to develop subject knowledge (including pedagogy) and teaching skills and the *ITT Co-ordinator (SLT)* overseeing wider professional development. Capel (2003) found that although there is little confusion over roles as stated in course documentation there are likely to be differences in perceptions of the role. In that study subject mentors did not perceive their main role as supporting and developing teaching, whereas *Professional Mentors (SLTs)* and trainees thought that this was the main function of a mentor - a possible explanation being that subject mentors perceived that the trainee had the main responsibility for developing their teaching because the mentor's designated time for their role was often very limited. Subject mentors thought they were mainly responsible for supporting trainees to reach standards in further professional responsibilities - e.g. underpinning theory, practical principles, critical reflection and appraisal of their own teaching, whereas in the course documentation this was more frequently a role for the *Professional Mentor*. There is a similar parallel role here with the co-ordination of induction when Harrison (2002) found that NQTs were often unclear about who was in charge of their professional support and assessment. This indicates that although role descriptions are clearly available to all parties they are interpreted differently by individuals within schools.

Around 6000 trainees in England each year follow a school based ITE programme called the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP). This training programme is devised by the school to meet the needs of the trainees, and each trainee is supported by a school mentor. This is a slightly different role to those of mentors supporting HEI based ITE. In a study of this route Brookes (2005) discusses findings from Ofsted who found that school based trainers were not adequately prepared for their role in implementing wide range programmes for training

teachers, with the main weakness being the quality of mentoring in schools. The SLT in each school has overall responsibility for the quality assurance of the work of GTP mentors, a somewhat different and more extended role since all GTP trainees are employed by the school as unqualified teachers.

This suggests that the SLT has a key professional development role in schools in helping trainees, mentors and subject teachers to understand better their complementary roles. The contribution to professional development though acting as subject mentors is well established (Giles and Wilson 2004, Boyd 2002) as they undertake a wider role in school through supporting trainees. The subject mentor role is also seen as enhancing leadership and interpersonal skills, helping to build confidence and professional courage. The dual role of providing support and assessing progress is highly professional. All this is at a time of rapid change with Couse and Rousso (2006) noting that teacher education has shifted focus to enquiry and outcomes, in contrast with past practice that focussed upon content and mastery of skills. The SLT role holder clearly has a role in developing this wider professional perspective. When considering wider competences of mentoring (Clutterbuck, 2001)

- Self awareness (understanding self)
- Communication
- Sense of proportion / humour
- Interest in developing others
- Goal clarity
- Behavioural awareness (understanding others)
- Conceptualizing
- Business/ professional knowledge
- Commitment to own learning
- Relationship Management

it becomes clear what areas of professional development are possible through undertaking the role of a subject mentor. The SLT is usually a very experienced mentor who has extensive knowledge about ITE and the necessary personal qualities to guide mentors in their work and at the same time also make a personal contribution to developing trainees. For example SLTs often run a regular programme of seminars on educational topics to supplement the HEI programme.

Do trainees value the process of mentoring? A study by Hobson (2002) concluded that trainee teachers consider mentoring to be probably the key aspect of school based ITT but that teacher mentors are not always successful in creating conditions for effective trainee learning. In a study undertaken by university of Wales and North- East Wales Institute of Higher Education in 2002, Trainee's understanding of the techniques associated with developing the reflective practitioner was deemed deficient. Only 31% practiced discursive dialogue, 47% reflected on ethical issues and over a third of students did not use their lesson evaluations effectively. This is where the SLT in secondary schools can play a key and complimentary role by virtue of their wider experience of initial training, knowledge of the *QTS Standards* and how the school can best meet the individual needs of trainees. Moreover the SLTs have a co -ordination role within a school, and undertake the coaching of mentors and participate in considerable peer networking (Rhodes and Beneicke 2002). However a review of studies of which aspects of school based partnerships support the professional development of trainees (EPPI, 2003) found that there is comparatively little research on what schools actually do in partnership. Out of the 660 studies that were considered in the review there were a large

number about the role of the supervising teacher (mentor) but none that addressed specifically the role of the SLT. The research reported in this paper is therefore focussed on the role of the SLT who we see as an increasingly important influence in school based initial teacher training as they are usually hold the roles for several years, and so provide an element of continuity in the relationship between HEIs and partnership schools.

Research Questions

- How do Senior Liaison Tutors perceive their role at a time of constant change in schools resulting from the government's modernisation agenda?
- How important is the Senior Liaison Tutor in ensuring the improvement in quality of the school based part of the training?
- What are the key features that contribute to the success in the role?

Methodology

Data from SLTs (collected by a two yearly survey to 200 schools in partnership in the past 3 years) was analysed in order to provide a bench mark for school activity within the partnership. The survey in 2006 has particular focus on the role of the SLT with a view to identifying and exploring issues within the SLT role such as: how SLTs quality assure the work of mentors; what contribution do they make to the training process; how much resource is available for the role and how the responsibility for ITT links with complementary roles. In the survey SLTs rated aspects of the role as given in existing partnership documentation by importance and also provided a self rating of how well they thought they were doing.

There were 70 responses to the survey from secondary partnership schools.

Focus groups of 45 SLTs in groups of four or five reviewed the survey findings and their comments are included in the findings section of this paper.

Responses from questionnaire and the focus groups

The Role of the SLT

Most of the respondents have held the role of SLT for less than 4 years (44), of these 15 have only been in their role for a year. (Fig.1) Three groups of SLTs commented on the potential training needs for new SLTs to support them in their role and suggested there was value in HEIs offering training for them.

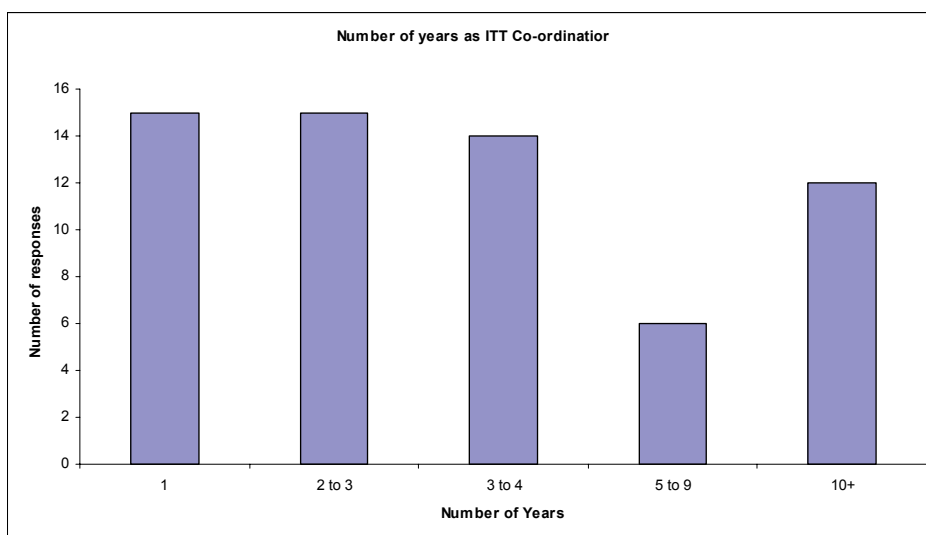


Figure 1

Schools, typically take trainees from 2 or more HEIs. Most schools have trainees from 2 or 3 HEIs. (Fig.2) One large group was surprised that 19 schools only took students from two providers and 6 schools only took from one provider since schools are so used to working with a larger number of providers throughout Yorkshire and Humberside.

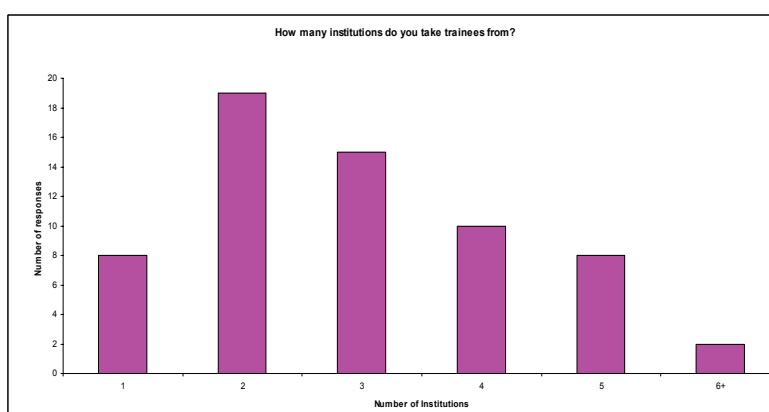


Figure 2

Most comments acknowledged the description of the role of the SLT. One school noted that having training school status ‘...has given us time to do it properly’. Whilst the role states that the SLT is a co-ordinator, one comment given was that it is ‘more than co-ordinating, it also has elements of monitoring and accountability’. For a number of SLTs the issue of time to carry out the role was mentioned: ‘time constraints make it impossible to deliver fully what is indicated in the description’.

Selection for role

In many cases, SLTs have acquired their role as part of a wider brief in their role as a senior leader within their school. For some this is part of a human resources (HR) or Continuing Professional Development (CPD) role. There are a number of SLTs who are in their role as they are interested in developing trainee teachers. In a few cases the role is an advertised post, either within the school or externally through local or national media. When this is an

advertised role within the school, it may not be a senior member of staff who gains the role, in many cases it is a person with interest or someone who has had experience as a mentor. When advertised externally the role is often part of the remit for a senior management post. In a few cases SLTs have volunteered for the role.

The reasons why SLTs were selected for their role tend to relate to their experiences in ‘effective work with trainees’ and their familiarity with the process for gaining QTS. For others, it is related to their experiences in training and leading staff. A few respondents related their personal qualities to appointment to the role, stating that they were ‘approachable, professional, thorough and organised’ or that they felt they were ‘an excellent teacher and role model’. One focussed group commented on how Universities don’t have any say on who is an SLT and felt this might be concerning since if there were a problem the University couldn’t deselect the SLT without significant consequences. There was a query about whether quality information was collected on SLTs and what happened to the information. They also wondered whether SHU had any problems with SLTs not performing their role.

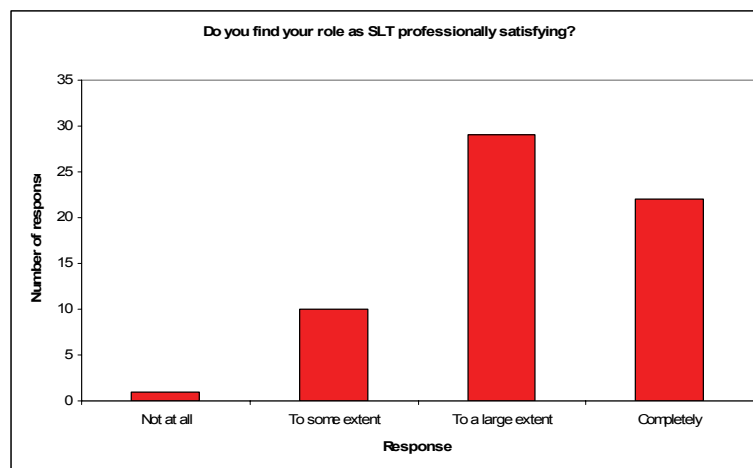


Figure 3

The majority of respondents find their role satisfying to a large extent. (Fig.3) The reasons for this given by them are that many find it ‘good to work with the next generation of teachers’. Others stated that it ‘helps me reflect on my own practice and improve my own quality of teaching’. For some the idea of support was prominent; ‘supporting teachers with their career development’.

All focus groups stressed how heartening it was that lots of enthusiasm for the role comes through on the survey despite lack of time and even lack of recognition and status in schools, in some cases, for the role.

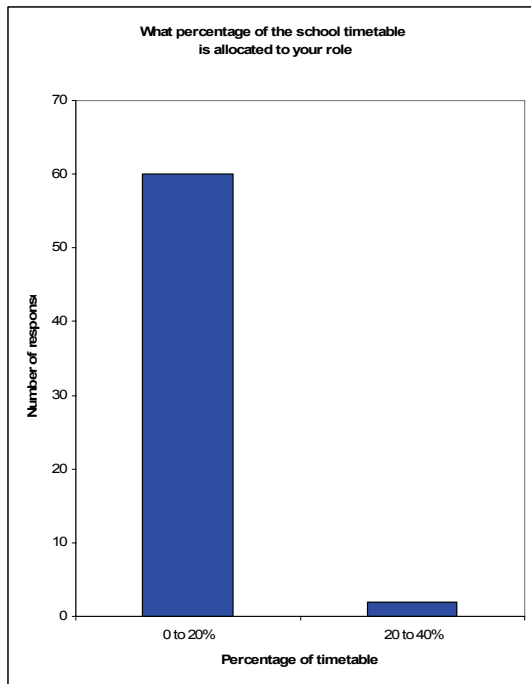


Figure 4

Whilst importance is given to the role, few SLTs have a large proportion of their timetable given to the role. (Fig.4) Most have between 0 and 20% of their timetable. Exact proportions of time were not given or requested in the questionnaire.

The teaching profession has undergone a radical change over the last two years with policy shifts in reforming the workforce into one which is more professional in its behaviour and more focussed on its core purpose or teaching and learning (rather than taking up time in carrying out administrative tasks).

The survey sought to find out if these reforms had any impact on the work of SLTs. It was quite surprising to see that many of the respondents said that it hadn't changed their role at all. In very few cases time had now been allocated to the role, for planning and preparation, and in others administrative tasks had now been taken on by clerical staff. Mentors in one school had lost their time and were being paid a fee instead.

New legislation and national strategies introduced into schools have impacted on the role of SLTs. Most have had to review and incorporate these into their school based programmes for trainees. Liaising with a wider range of agencies to ensure delivery of these issues was noted by one SLT. A few others stated that they have to keep themselves 'well informed and up to date' so that they can keep trainees up to date.

Working with Trainees

SLTs were asked what benefits they thought trainees brought to their school. There is clearly a wide range of fresh ideas, innovative pedagogy, enthusiasm, up to date subject knowledge

and new resources for subject areas or schools that trainees add to their placement schools. In addition some provide support for extra curricular activities and educational visits. It was interesting to see that in a couple of schools the impact of trainees had made others reflect on their own practice – ‘they provide a focus for the professional development of our teachers by requiring them to consider and evaluate their own teaching’.

To support these views SLTs are split on where they do or do not collect evidence to support these views. (Fig.5) Most of those who do collect evidence do so by a variety of methods: informal or formal. Formally, this is done by written feedback, evaluation or observations of trainees. Most data is collected through informal means. The high number of ‘no’ responses to this question was felt to be significant by several groups of SLT s who raised this in general discussion. It was felt to be a valuable area to research since there was so much anecdotal evidence but no formal evidence. They felt that the collection of evidence could raise the status of ITT within the school and gain further status and recognition for the role of mentor and ITT Coordinator

Other evidence of the benefits brought by trainees is seen in recruitment as schools have recruited trainees whom they have had on placements.

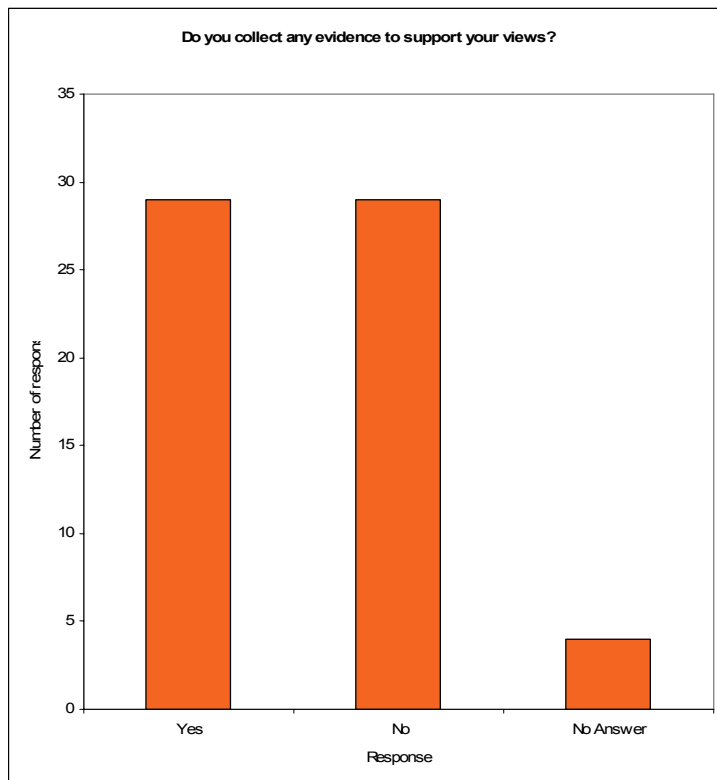


Figure 5

Most of the SLTs do not have a base area in which to work with the trainees. However 25 of the respondents do have a base. This may be a departmental office, a professional development area used by all staff or the school’s general staff room /work room.

In the general discussion SLTs felt the high number of no responses was significant. It was important that the trainees had their own quiet workspace with computer facilities to aid them in their University work as well as preparation for school and was part of welcoming them into the school and being prepared for them.

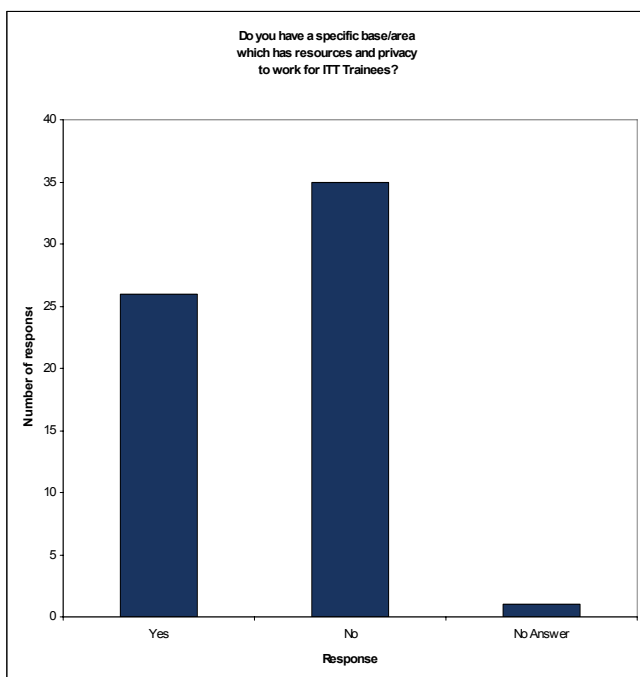
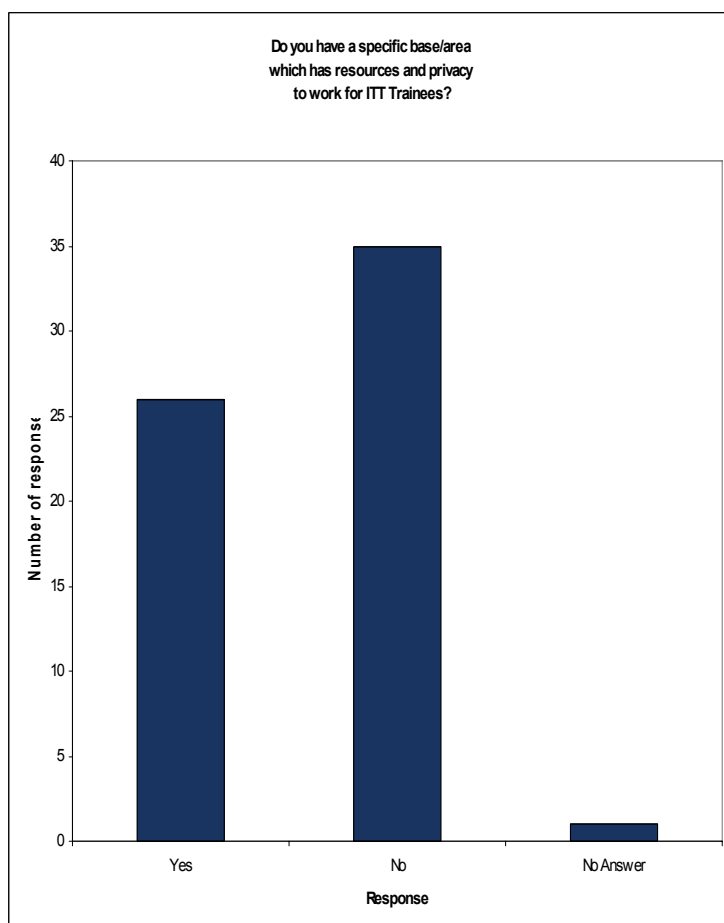


Figure 6

Few of the respondents make regular use of web based support materials or CD Roms. (Fig.7) There are many support materials available for trainees one such example is the 'Teacher Training ResourceBank'(TTRB), which is an online resource offering materials and links to support both pedagogy and subject specialism.

Figure 7



The schools which do use resources to support learning of trainees cited national websites such as those offered by the DfES; Teachers' TV, GTC, National College for School Leadership and the TDA website. A number of schools have a video library that is used to support trainees. Others get information from meetings.

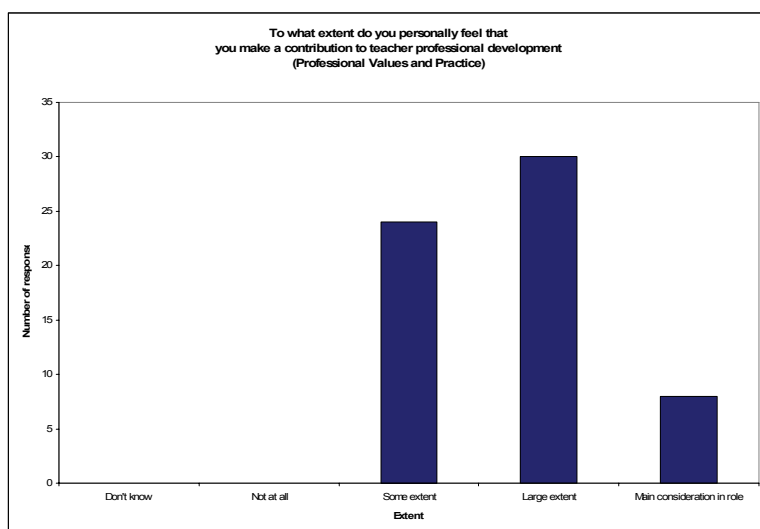


Figure 8

The majority of Senior Liaison Tutors feel that they make a contribution to the teacher professional development standard of developing professional values and standards. (Fig.8) This standard outlines the attitudes and commitment to be expected of anyone qualifying to be a teacher, which is derived from the Professional Code of the General Teaching Council for England. In one case only, it was felt that the ‘subject mentor has more impact’. One focus group were surprised that such a large number of SLTs said that their contribution to professional values and practice was only ‘to some extent since they perceived this as a key area of contribution for the Senior Liaison Tutor.

SLTs were asked ‘what are the key issues when working with a range of providers?’ The key issues that arose from this were:

- Timing of placements
- Standardising documentation
- Differing expectations

Trainees are normally expected to spend a total of *between* 18 and 32 weeks on schools placements depending on their programme of study. However the timing of these often differs so a challenge for the SLTs is to ensure that they are able to induct and support trainees irrespective of when they start their placement within the academic year.

Documentation from HEIs can be very different in its format from the providing institution - each requires evidence of the trainees’ attainment against the QTS standards but in different styles. In some cases this is very specific (matched against each individual standard) in others more general (with discussions matched against the groups of standards).

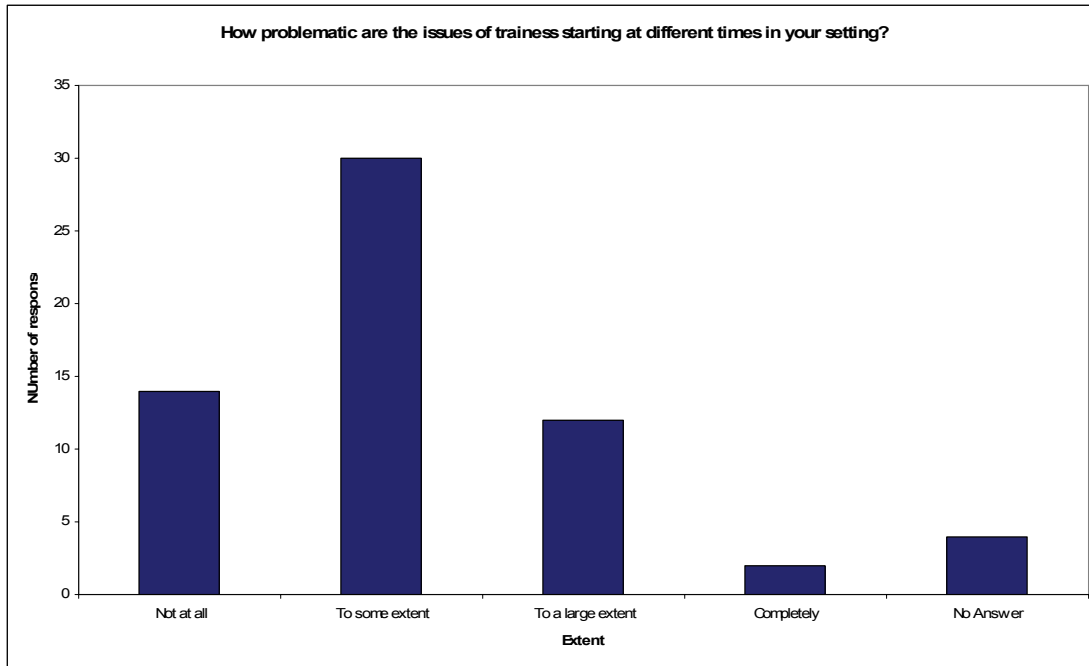


Figure 9

The issue of trainees starting at different times is seen as problematic for half the institutions to some extent (Fig.9) and a further 25% to a large extent. The reasons given for this relate to continuity and the difficulties in ‘staggering induction and training’, this is seen by one SLT as ‘inefficient use of my time’. For some it is actually a benefit as it allows them to ‘stagger their induction and training’.

The different starting times, despite causing some problems, are managed well or excellently by schools. (Fig.10) Schools are adaptable and flexible thus running training at different times. In one case the SLT ‘drip feeds’ early starters and runs more in-depth sessions when other trainees arrive.

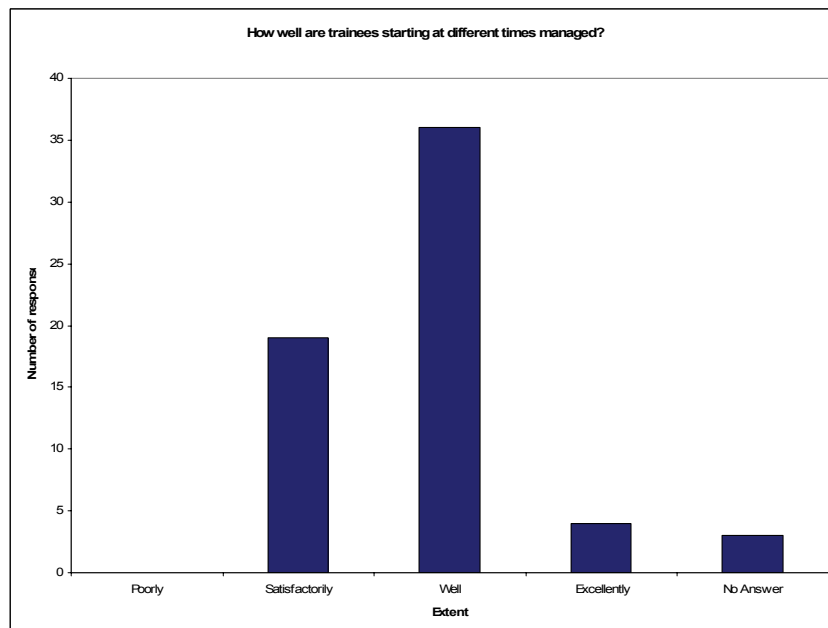


Figure 10

The SLTs were asked how schools might manage the different starting times of placements better. Some saw this as needing to have a planned programme of training, others said it may be better to stick with one provider. HEIs may have to consider whether they are able to agree common placement times as this may resolve the issue for some. The needs of the trainee were put forward by one school ‘all ITT students need an individual programme to meet their needs’.

Not all schools have trainees following the employment based (GTP) training route. Of the 42 who do have GTPs, 32 of these have responsibility for their training.

School ITT Procedures

Where schools have trainees following an employment based route they tend to be responsible for ensuring the quality of school based training for them. This is done by regular meetings with mentors and tutors, observation of the trainee, feedback from university mentors and through monitoring portfolios and assessments.

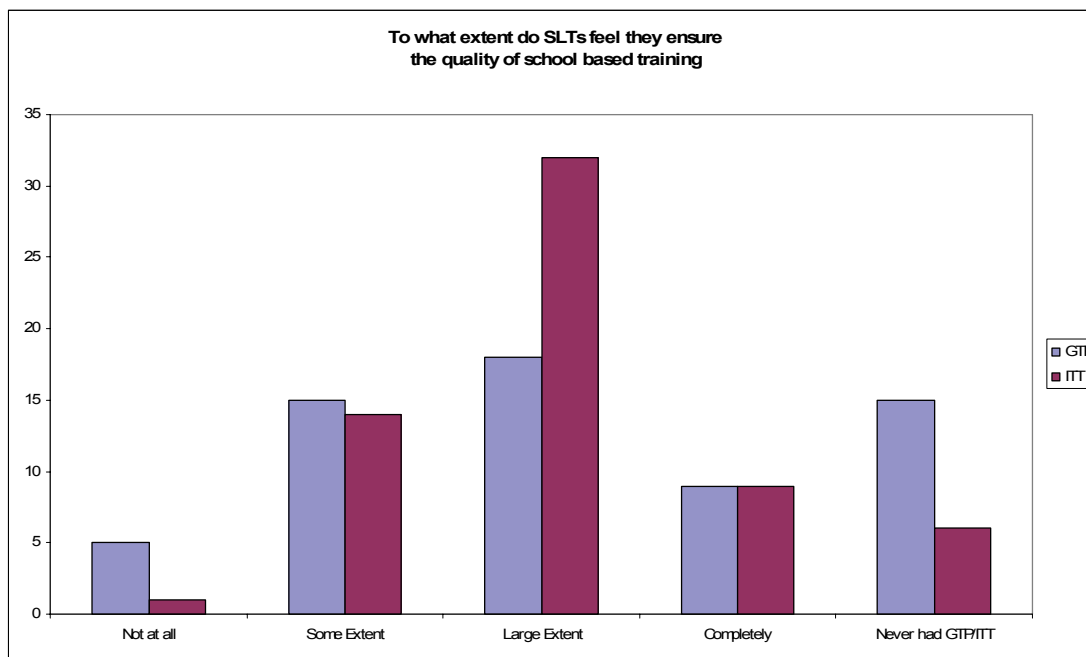


Figure 11

Procedures for monitoring ITT trainees (Fig.11) seem to be more embedded into some schools.

More SLTs felt they had better ensured the quality of school based training for this than with GTP. For ITT it is done through observation, monitoring and evaluation feedback forms and reports; feedback from students; formal questionnaires; joint observations; records of weekly meetings; and attendance at training events.

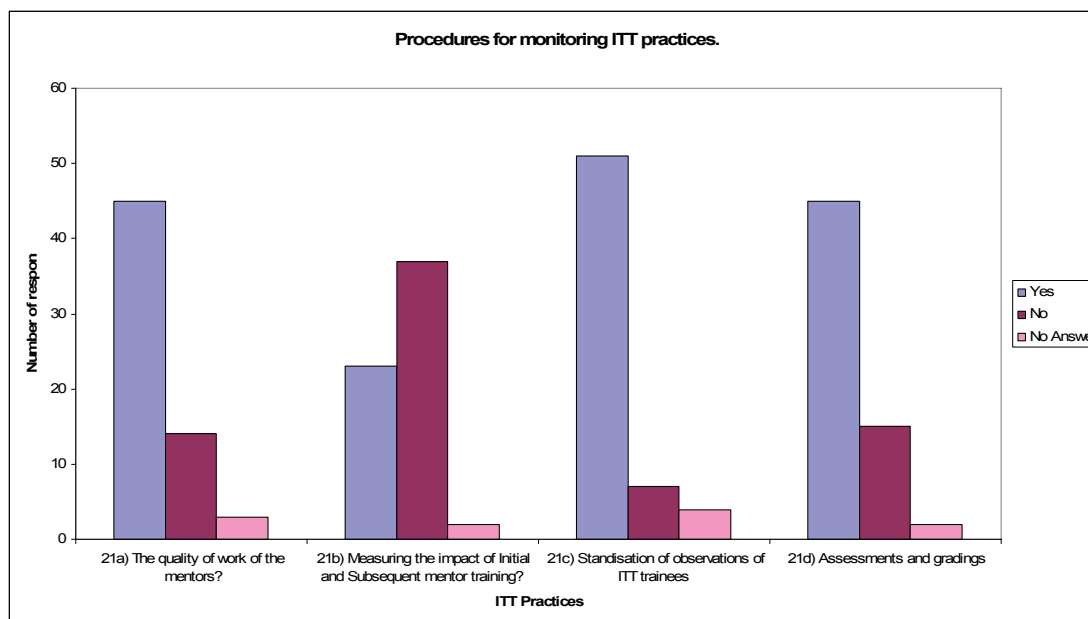


Figure 12

A series of questions were asked about procedures for monitoring ITT practices. (Fig.12)The quality of the work of mentors tends to monitored through paired observation, checking reports, informal discussions and formal meetings. Two groups of SLTs registered their surprise at the large number (45) who answered yes to this question. A typical comment amongst SLTs was

- *‘There is an element of professional trust. I look at the paperwork, talk to trainees and have discussions with the mentors. But there are no formal mechanisms.’*

The impact of initial and subsequent mentor training is probably not monitored quite as closely. SLTs are not always sure about exactly what training mentors have undertaken and at what stage they are at. Some schools have systems for feedback and evaluation following training events but it is not possible to determine how this is followed up in terms of impact on quality of mentoring.

The observations of trainees are monitored through standardisation procedures in the majority of schools. They tend to be done by joint/paired observations or by a quality assurance observation done by the SLT or a senior member of staff.

Assessment and gradings of ITT trainees are monitored by 73% of SLTs.

24% said they do not monitor the assessment or grading of trainees in their school ITT procedures. However, the majority also gain informal information through discussions with mentors. In some cases the actual grade is left to the mentor and the SLT intervenes where there are specific issues to resolve. One group of SLTs during the discussion on the data had a slight concern that 25% of respondents feel they have no role in moderating grades. Another group felt that this might be because a number of teachers are likely to observe the trainee teaching and this was sufficient moderation.

They also supported paired observations (SLT and Mentor) to support this internal consistency. One group felt that this aspect of the work of the SLT needed promoting.

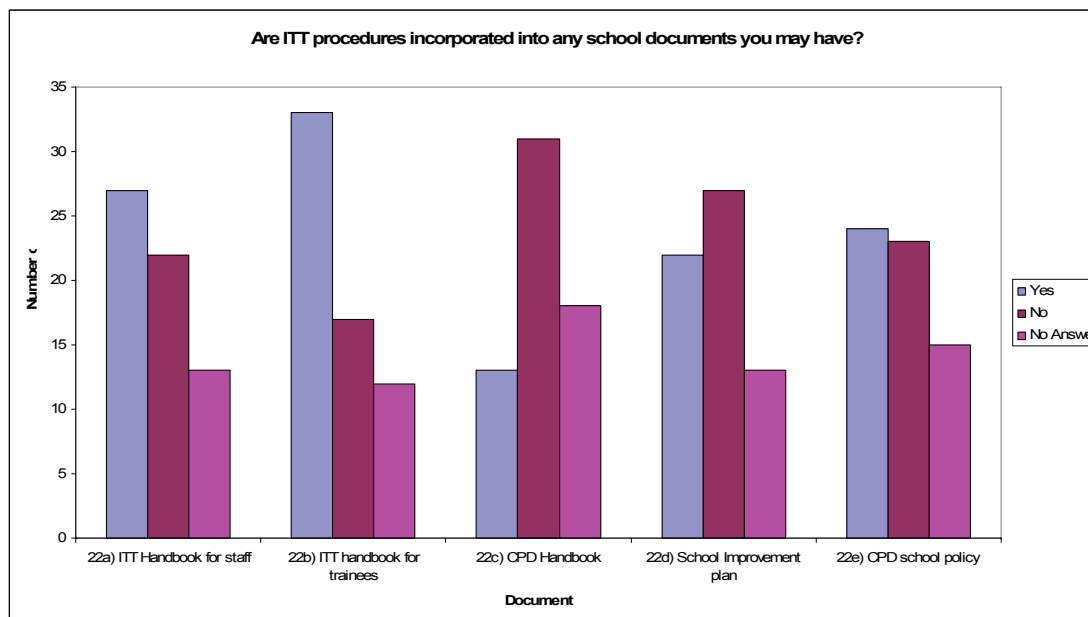


Figure 13

SLTs were asked if they had any procedures in any school documents. A fairly mixed response was gained to these questions with 10 or more respondents not providing an answer. A large number of the sample cohort has ITT procedures incorporated into a handbook for staff. However there are nearly as many who do not. Schools do, however seem to have handbooks for their trainees. Less have procedures within a CPD (Continuing Professional Development) handbook. The majority do not include ITT procedures within their school improvement plans, although there are a third that do. A mixed response was gained from the question that asked if ITT procedures were part of the CPD school policy, just over half who responded have procedures within their policy but an almost equal amount do not.

Procedures for the review of ITT procedures within schools are even more haphazard. Of the 17 comments given, 4 have no review system. No one common system exists across the other schools. So procedures are reviewed through reports written for governors, informal or formal termly or annual meetings with mentors; self evaluation forms produced as part of training school status for the TDA.

Other mechanisms in place to support the quality assurance of ITT school based training were noted by the SLTs. These included:

- Weekly meetings and discussions with mentors and trainees to gain feedback on progress
- Training sessions for mentors and trainees
- Evaluation of trainees learning through questionnaires
- Cross checking trainees attainment against QTS standards
- Observation of lessons

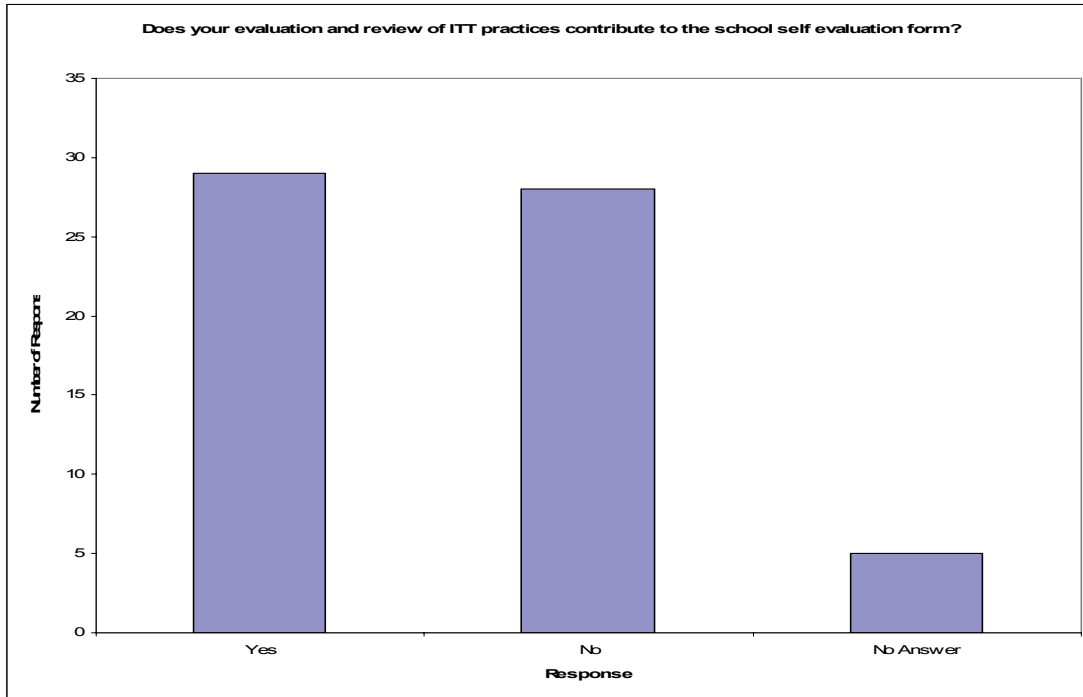


Figure 14

Schools now must be self evaluating in all aspects of their work. SLTs were asked if their practices contributed to the 'Self Evaluation Form'. Approximately half the sample said their review and evaluation did contribute to the SEF. Of the 17 comments obtained, 9 do not yet contribute ITT practice to the SEF. Of the 8 who do, it is done in discussion with the head or senior management team in the school. For others it is part of a CPD review or feeds in as part of the schools quality assurance systems. Where schools have training school status, the evaluation and review is part of the processes for maintaining that position.

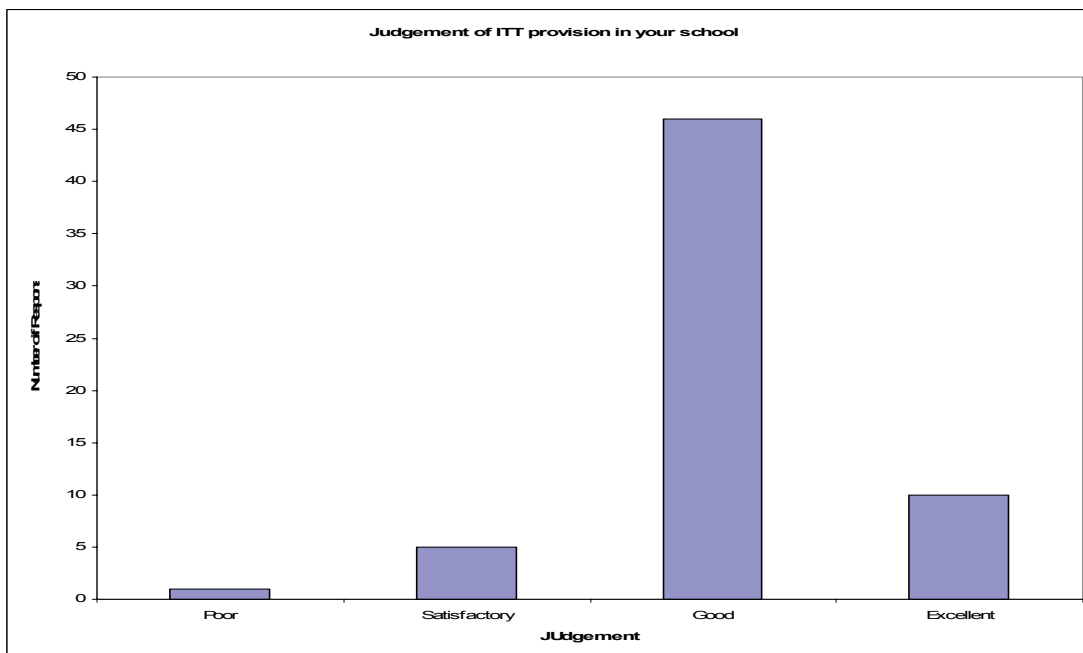
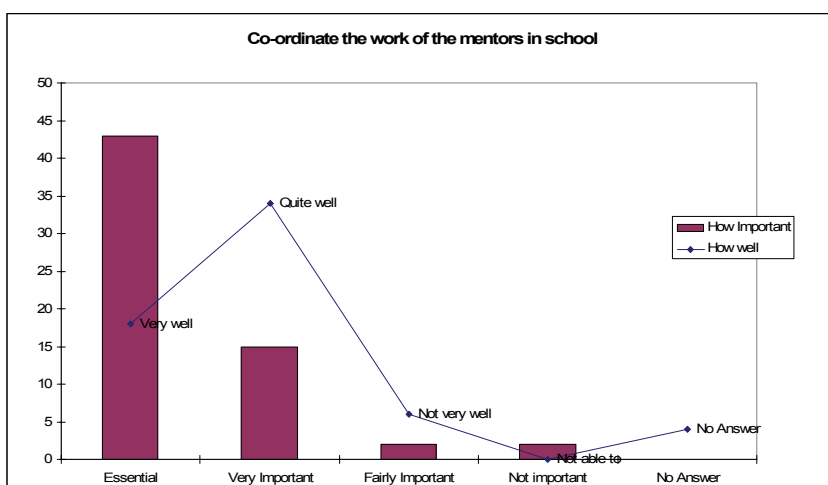


Figure 15

SLTs were asked to judge ITT provision in their school. (Fig. 15) The majority judged it to be good or excellent. To support their judgement, they have used comments and formal feedback from universities, trainees and mentors; the progression of trainees as they complete their placements; the number of students who pass and subsequently get employment;

In the next section, SLTs were asked specifically about aspects of their role and how important the responsibilities were and how well they felt they were able to fulfil the responsibilities.

Whilst SLTs feel that it is essential that they co-ordinate the work of mentors in school, they felt they did this quite well (Fig. 16) as opposed to very well. One SLT commented the partnership might ‘bite the bullet’ and have higher expectations of the SLT where they



require that mentors pass on their weekly mentor notes to SLTs’ One University does this and this helps me track what is going on.’

Figure 16

There was a strong correlation between SLTs feeling that they should be the main link person to the

university and how well they did this. Where it was seen as essential, SLTs saw this as being done very well. (Fig 17). This was the same for providing trainees with a suitable induction programme (Fig 18) and also for co-ordinating a programme of general seminars for the trainees (Fig 19)

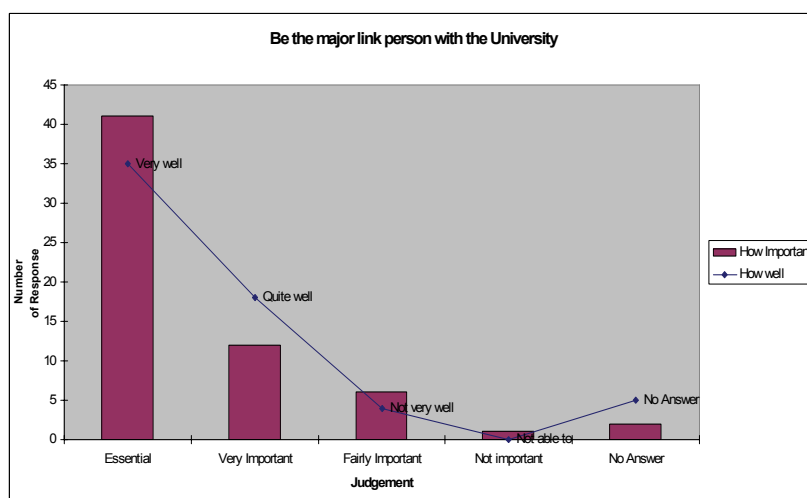


Figure 17

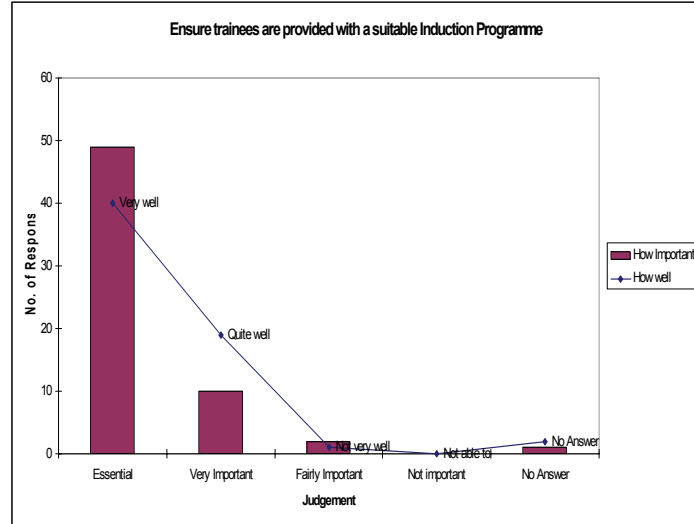


Figure 18

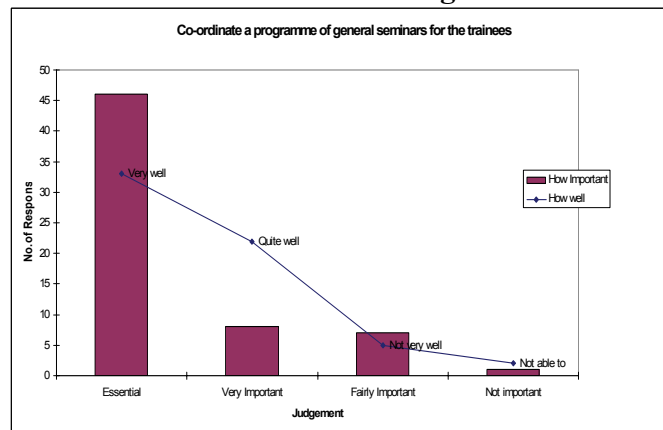


Figure 19

A different pattern emerged when SLTs were asked about the administrative side of their role. (Fig 20) Whilst the majority saw it as an essential part of the responsibilities, fewer felt they did this very well. Most felt that they did this quite well. This was a similar pattern for ‘ensuring trainees are aware of school procedures....’. Again it was seen as essential or very important by the majority of respondents, but more felt that they carried out the duty quite well rather than very well.

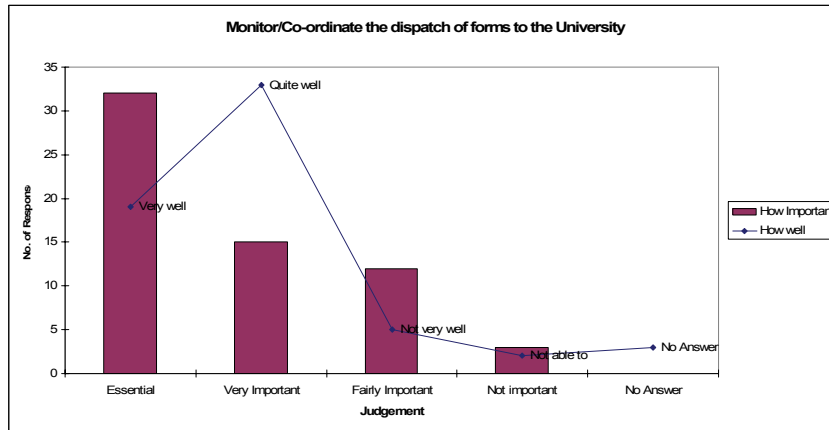


Figure 20

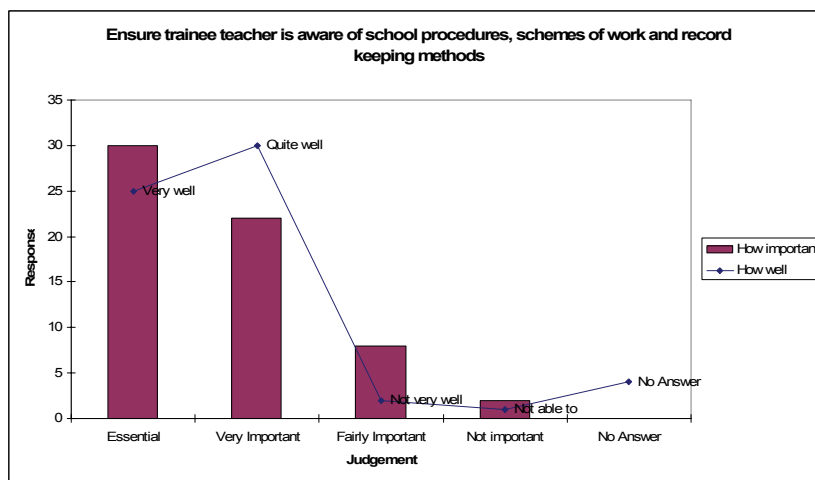


Figure 21

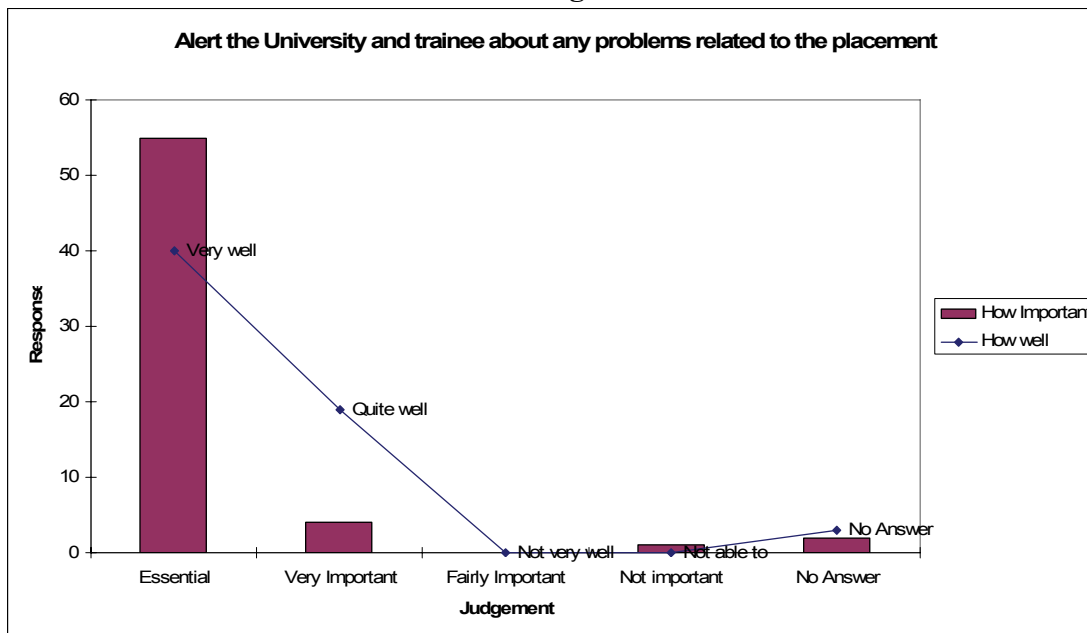


Figure 22

A strong correlation was found between how important alerting the university about problems with the placement and how well this was done, almost all respondents gave a similar response.

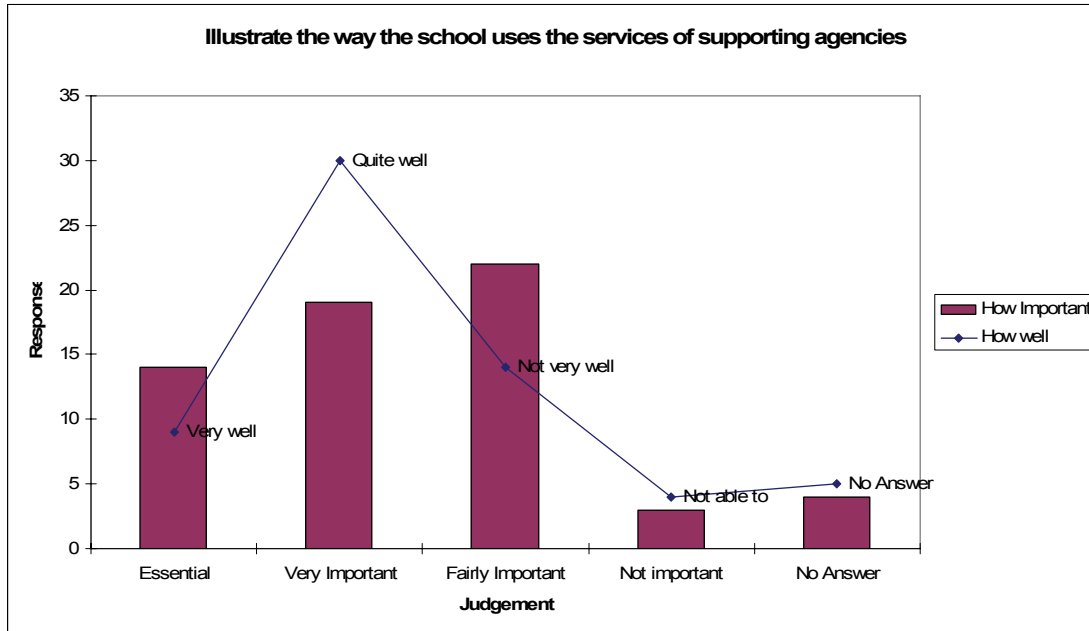


Figure 23

The SLTs feel that they are able to illustrate the way the school uses the services of supporting services quite well and see this as fairly important but not essential to their role.

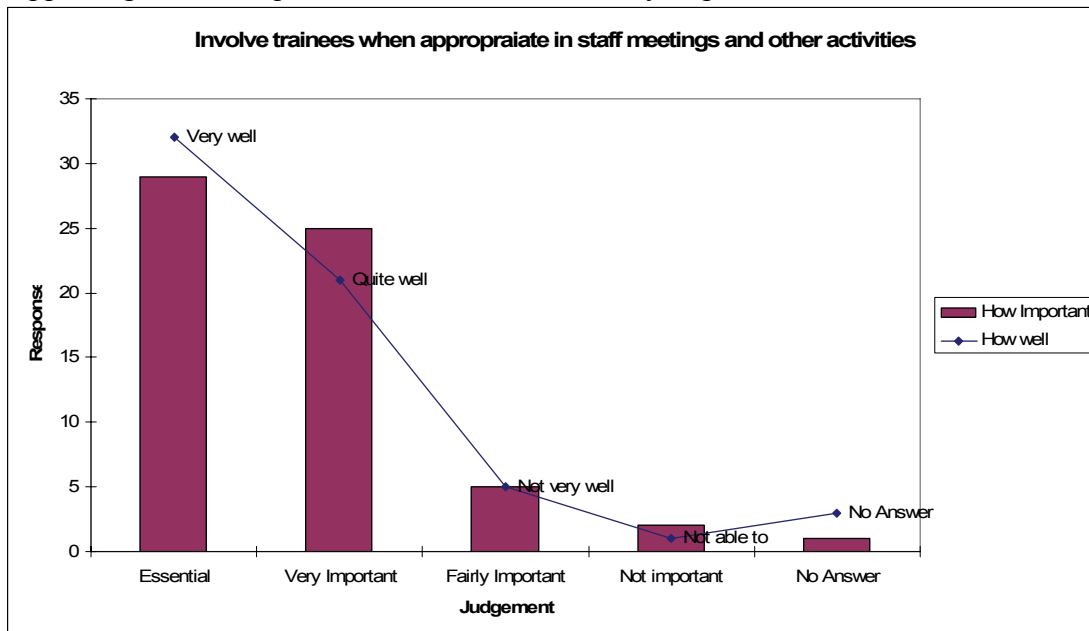


Figure 24

SLTs feel it is essential responsibility of their role to involve trainees in important staff meetings and other activities. They feel that they do this very well.

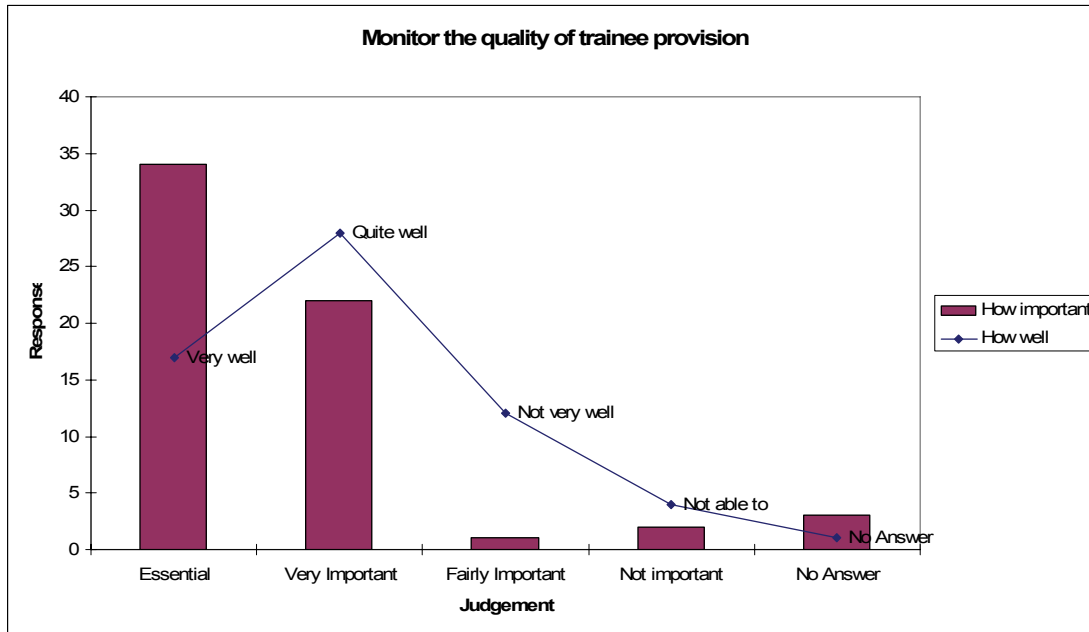


Figure 25

Whilst SLTs saw monitoring the quality of provision for trainees as an essential part of their role they felt that they did this quite well rather than very well. A substantial number felt they did not do this very well.

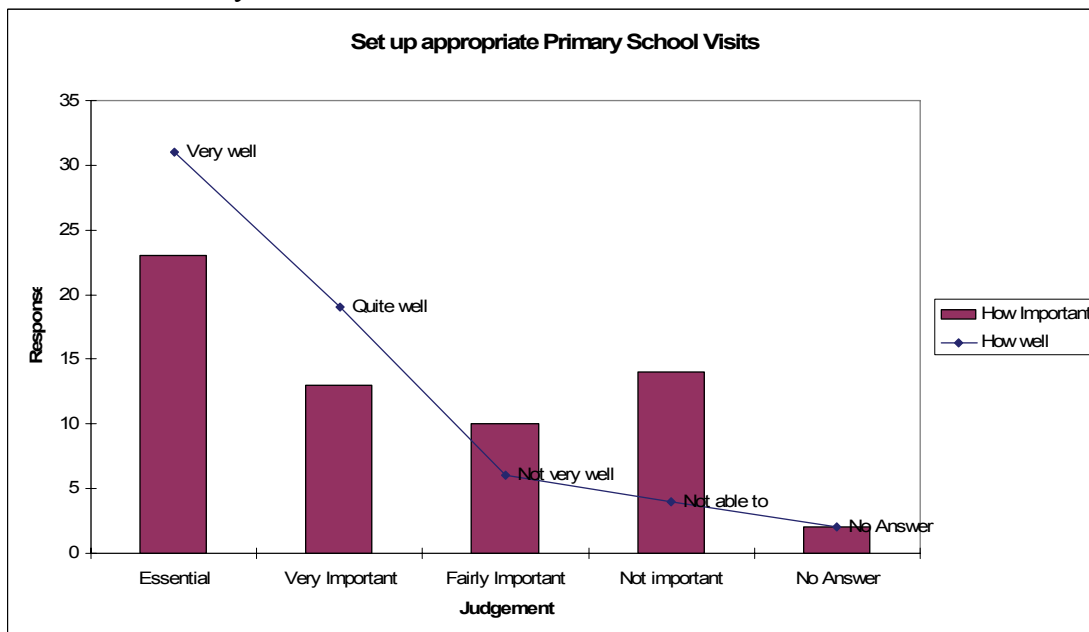


Figure 26

Arranging primary school visits gave a mixed response regarding how important SLTs saw this as their responsibility. Whilst just over a third saw it as essential, a quarter of the cohort did not see it as important. Trainees are expected to spend two days in each placement within a primary school in order to meet the QTS Standards. The pattern regarding how well this was done by SLTs was quite different with the majority feeling they did it very well followed by a reducing amount stating they did it quite well.

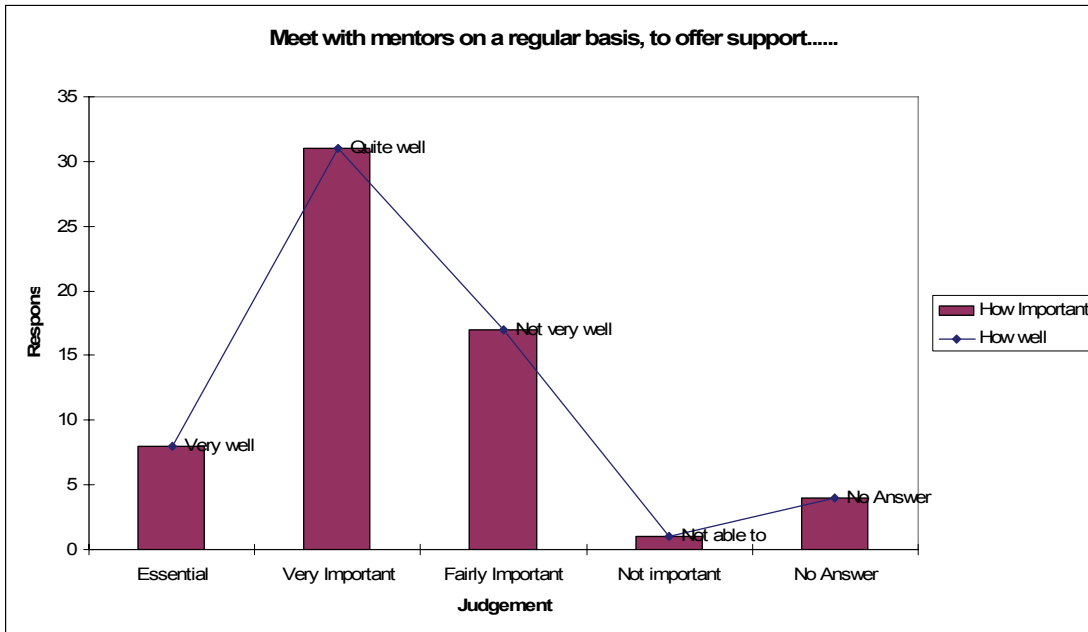


Figure 27

Over half the SLTs think it is a very important part of their responsibilities to meet with mentors and offer support. The same proportion think that they do this quite well.

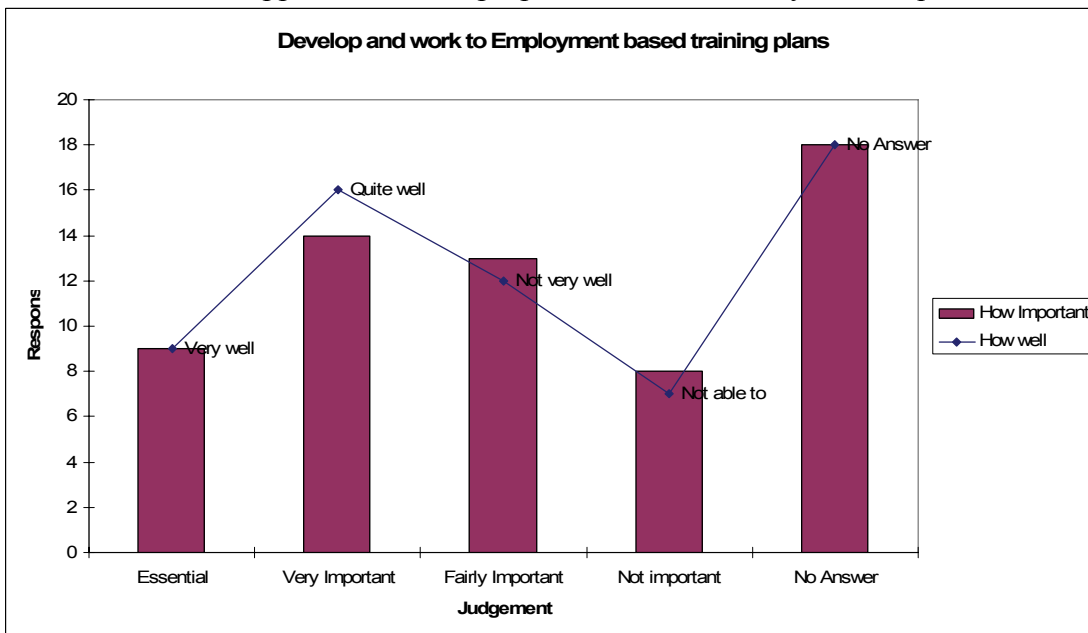


Figure 28

As not all schools have GTPs, there were mixed responses, regarding developing and working to employment based training plans, from the cohort who do. The majority of them see it as a very important responsibility and most feel they do this quite well.

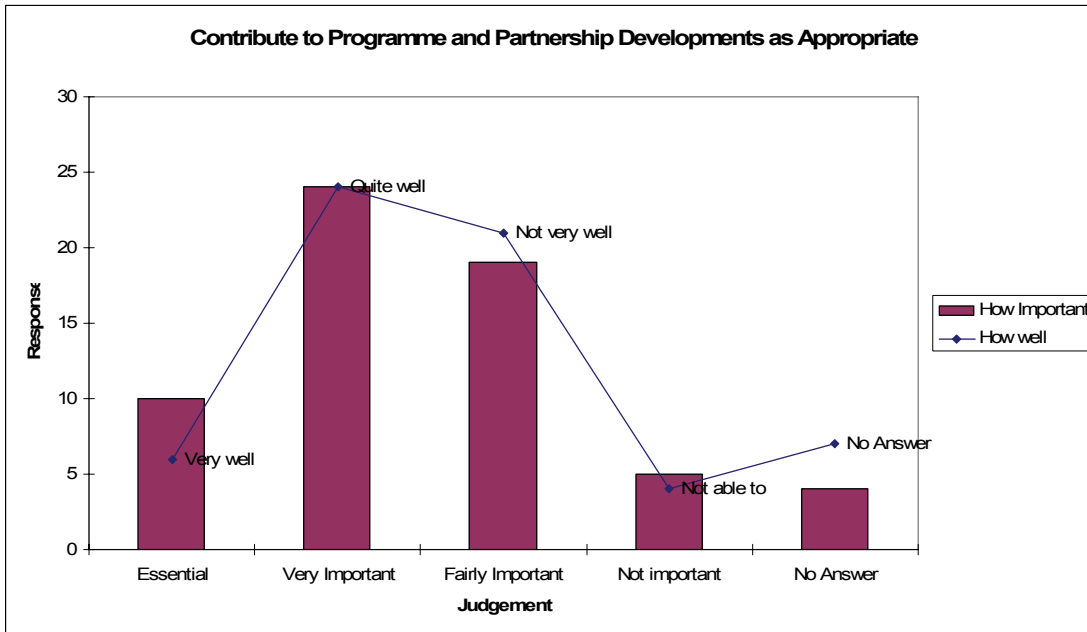


Figure 29

Similarly there was almost a normal distribution when SLTs were asked if they contributed to programme and partnership developments. SLTs see it as a very important responsibility and again most feel they do this quite well.

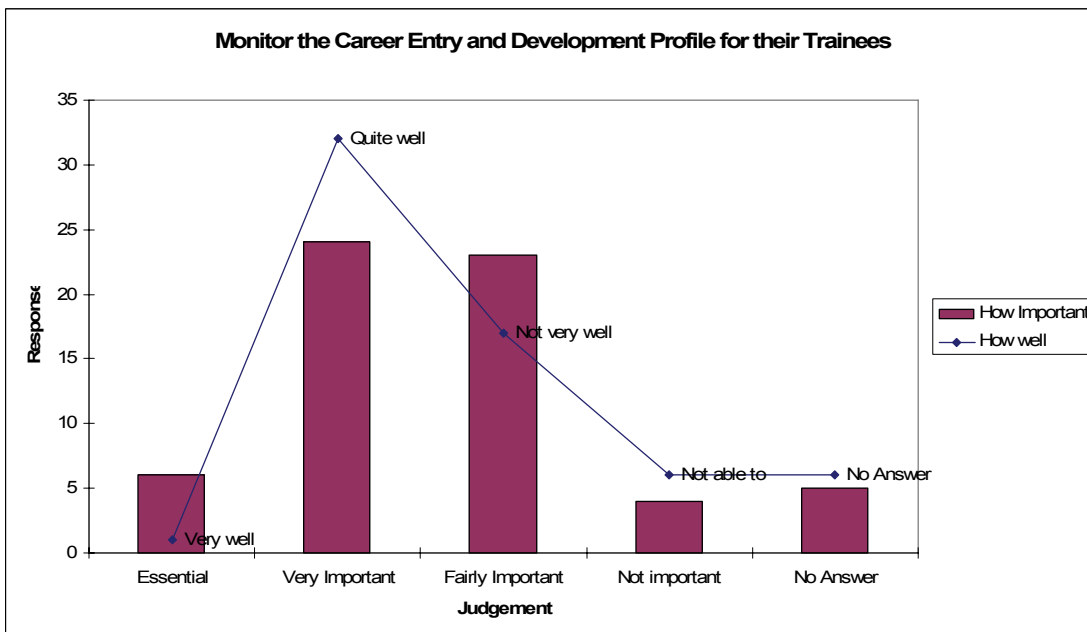


Figure 30

Most SLTs feel monitoring the CEDP is very important (fig 30) or fairly important as part of their responsibilities. Most stated that they felt they did this quite well. There is a significant proportion (just under a third) who feel they don't do this very well.

Finally, SLTs were asked to identify the barriers to fulfilling their role successfully. Overwhelmingly the issue of time in order to carry out the role was given as a major barrier. Other issues raised were:

- Meeting a wide range of deadlines
- Keeping up with changes in ITT
- Inconsistencies between HEIs and what they expect of SLTs
- Resistance to change from established mentors
- Balancing other duties alongside the role of SLT

Implications of the findings

The survey was received with considerable interest and support by SLTs at the focus group meetings. It was felt that the survey acted as a stimulus for reflection on the role as well as being useful for promoting the role. The enthusiasm for the role was evident through the survey as well as at the meetings and SLTs felt it would be helpful if HEIs could promote the status and importance of the role within the wider community of Headteachers Associations and the Local Authority. There were a number of aspects that it was felt Universities could influence. This included promoting the value of mentoring through mentor recognition and accreditation at Masters level for example and offering a forum for SLTs for the exchange of good practice and resources.

The survey has highlighted a number of issues and constraints to partnership in line with that suggested by the literature. The lack of time to support ITT is given as the major obstacle to success for the Senior Liaison Tutor. This is further complicated by the fact that many SLTs have other roles and responsibilities which may be seen as more integral to school specific needs. Time is largely a function of financial resource.

There is a lack of transparency and a variety of ways in how schools use the resources transferred from the University. There is no obligation for governors to ring fence the resource solely for training purposes nor legislation making governors responsible for ensuring full student entitlement.

Bassett and Green (2003) found in their partnership survey that 70% of respondents stated that resources received from the University were not always passed onto them. Rather it was spent on books and equipment across the school and had little impact on ITT. A variation in the amount was also reported. Four fifths of mentors and coordinators approved the proposition that legislation be enacted to ensure that the funding for school based ITT should be devoted to that end. Schools did not join the partnership for financial benefit - mentors most often quote professional development as the key reason for valuing mentoring (*Secondary New Mentor Survey, SHU 2006*) - nevertheless the money is considered insufficient to do a thorough job. SLTs felt that more resources would mean that mentors would be more motivated towards ensuring quality provision for training and SLTs could undertake more comprehensive quality assurance.

Currently it is highly unlikely that most universities in England will increase their payment to schools by any significant amount since the financing of partnership activity is very large and many universities operate at a break even or even at a slight loss with regards to ITT. An alternative could be for payment to be made directly to the school by the TDA thus bypassing the university according to a daily rate. The logistics of this would be immense. In addition if the current resource were reallocated many HEIs might well be in a financially untenable situation and consider closing parts or all of their ITT provision (eg. Liverpool University,

London Institute of Education, Leeds University have already taken action). Instead many universities offer creative solutions to the difficulty of increasing payments to schools by offering additional CPD for mentors as part of a package of a flexible package of support and training.

Priority and choice is also a function of resource.

' The perpetuation of this system which requires one partner to comply with legislative requirements and confers on the other the right to opt in or not is unlikely to encourage the effective development of equal partnership'

Bassett (2003).

Schools can pick and choose their level of engagement in partnership depending on their priorities, both at a whole school and departmental level. This includes the support offered to quality assurance by the SLTs. Whilst many of the Senior Liaison Tutors in the survey appeared to be managing the process satisfactorily this was only 31% of the partnership and in addition these might reasonably be expected to be well motivated co-ordinators. Although most of the results were not surprising to SLTs considering the data, the question was posed as to how representative these results were of the whole partnership. They wondered whether this was slightly worrying in relation to the management of quality assurance within schools and the degree to which SLTs are really monitoring and developing provision. Indeed 45% of the 142 ITT students surveyed in 2006 said they did not have regular scheduled meetings with the Senior Liaison Tutor. Also 69% were not seen teaching by the SLT in their final teaching placement. This area certainly appears to need further exploring since it is clear from trainee evaluations that they receive a very different package of support depending on the school or department within a school they are allocated to. Whole school moderation visits last year (2006) frequently showed quite a wide variation in the quality of mentoring support and interpretation of the role between different subjects, within a single school setting.

Over half the SLTs said they thought it was very important to meet regularly with mentors and offer support which reinforces the view that SLT devolved much of the 'professional responsibility' of mentoring and assessment to the mentor. Whilst the majority of respondents felt that the quality assurance of mentors work was a very important or essential part of their role the number who felt they did not do this well was fairly high. The reason given was the lack of time allocated to do the job properly. However, one group of SLTs suggested the time was ripe for increased expectations of the SLT as a driver to improve standards and as a method of enhancing their status in this role. There was a general feeling also among the SLTs attending the focus groups that the HEIs should move towards supporting schools further in addressing the issue of internal consistency within their settings so that mentors were not simply 'accountable' to the HEI by the process of selection and de-selection but also 'accountable' within the school. This suggests that the partnership needs to be clearer about the models of school based quality assurance that are considered good practice and to develop and share good practice within the partnership. This could include for example, sharing ITT policies, student and mentor handbooks and ideas for mechanisms to be put in place for reviewing effectiveness of provision annually within the school.

There is also a lack of knowledge about the university based element of the course, schools and SLTs felt universities need to be much clearer in helping schools to understand what is taught and how the work is complementary. Primary visits are an example of how schools perceive the difference in importance. A quarter of SLTs do not consider them important

whereas they are in fact essential for meeting the standards. SHU also needs to re visit its contribution to the partnership: to consider its unique contribution and ways in which it can be more dynamic.

There was a wide understanding about the difficulties of every HEI co-ordinating the start time of the various teaching practices and there was a general acceptance of the fact that schools had to simply manage this problem as best they could. This seemed to be less a problem that might have been anticipated and many SLTs were surprised at this.

Initial Teacher Education has taken place at SHU (and former colleges which eventually became SHU) for about 100 years. The partnership arrangements have clearly changed to reflect growth in numbers and government guidance and policies. In 1992 representatives from schools could all be fitted into one room for training! The other 182 schools have joined the partnership at various points and for various time spans with around 80 schools at the core of the partnership. Whilst there has been a growing expertise developing there is still perhaps a surprisingly high number of schools that do not view being involved in the teacher training process as a core part of CPD or important for school improvement. Its importance is not evidenced in terms of the school self evaluation document (SEF), school ITT/ CPD policies and handbooks and formal quality assurance mechanisms internal to the school. SLTs at the focus group meetings felt there was plenty of evidence to support the value of ITT in terms of impact on teaching and learning – it just had to be collected and evaluated in a systematic way. They welcomed this as a way of increasing the perceived value of engagement in ITT in terms of value added to the school.

The lack of time and status attached to the role of Senior Liaison Tutor, insufficient resources available from the HEI for the school based training, negligible reporting of the ‘evidence’ for increased pupil achievement through a school’s engagement with ITT (by HEIs or schools themselves) suggests that in many cases ITT remains a ‘bolt -on’ to the main business of the school rather than an integrated activity impacting positively on a community dedicated to teaching and learning.

Despite much research and literature pointing to ways in which mentors can work with trainees, there is a whole support/quality assurance process within a school that requires further research to explore whether the opportunities that partnership presents are being maximised. Indeed, whether we are in fact offering our trainees a consistent and coherent school based training programme nationally and whether we are satisfied with the current situation.

The report concludes with a summary of the key findings that have emerged from the research:

Summary of Key Findings

- SLT's tend to be enthusiastic about their role with the majority finding it professionally satisfying.
- SLTs thought that the monitoring the provision for ITE in their schools was an essential part of their role that needed to be enhanced.

- There is currently significant variability in how SLTs fulfil the quality assurance aspect of their role
- SLTs have insufficient time to do their job to the best of their ability.
- SLTs would like their role to be enhanced and given greater status within the school and see HEIs as playing an important part in this.
- SLTs think that HEIs have the key role in facilitating quality assurance and need to support schools in exchanging good practice across the partnership.
- Multiple demands on patterns of placements from different institutions create issues in schools.
- ITT requires stronger linkages to continuing professional development.
- Some schools need to review their allocation of resources to the SLT (mainly time to fulfil the role).
- There is a significant lack of understanding of the requirements of the QTS Standards relating to Primary school visits.
- SLTs do not have systematic evidence or information of the impact of engagement on pupil achievement.

Glossary of Terms

1. TTA- Teacher Training Agency- the government funded body responsible for all aspects of teacher training for initial teachers and some aspects of training for newly qualified teachers.
2. TDA - Teacher Development Agency- the new name for the TTA launched in 2004. A new brief to identify, develop and support the training needs of the wider teaching workforce which includes Initial Teachers in Training as one aspect.
3. DfES - Department for Education and Skills. The body that is responsible for Government Education Policies relating to teaching and learning and Teachers Pay and Conditions
4. SCITT- School Centred Initial Teacher Training. Initial Teacher Training that normally takes place in a group of schools usually without the involvement of a Higher Education Institution, funded directly by the Teacher Development Agency.
5. GTP - Graduate Teacher Programme. Employment based training where the graduate is training to teach whilst being employed and paid by a school as a super- numery teacher.
6. Partnership Promotion Schools - a small pilot project with a number of schools selected by application to the TTA to undertake self selected activities to promote initial teacher training within the partnership.

7. Partnership Development Schools - PDS- an extension of the notion of the PPS pilot - schools undertake outreach activities with other schools in cluster groups which support nationally identified aspects of partnership eg/ placement shortage subjects. These schools are selected and managed by TDA representatives.

8. 'Training School' Status - Primary and Secondary schools which are selected and funded by the DfES as quality providers of Initial Teacher Training and which take larger numbers of trainees. Schools are awarded this status which is then reviewed periodically.

9. ITE or ITT? The government funding organisation regards the process as Teacher Training. However Higher Education Institutions believe it should be less about training and more about notions of education

10. HEIs are Higher Education Institutions. They include all universities and colleges providing degree level education.

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