**Mentoring: a reflective log**

Mentor: SARAH FLETCHER

Licensed Teacher: L

Location: M SCHOOL

Duration: SEPTEMBER 1991-JULY 1992

This account has been agreed by LJ as a faithful record of our work together

**MENTOR**

I was keen to become a mentor as I saw it as a logical step towards an extension of my career in teaching. In addition, it was a way of bringing in untapped resources into the profession. I had noticed on several occasions that the foreign language assistants employed in secondary schools seemed, in some cases, to have untapped potential as teachers. Last year at Manshead, for example, we had a Colombian assistant who was a superb teacher at class and group level. She would frequently ask me to allow her to team teach with me. I think that everyone gained from that experience: the pupils and us both.

For my own part, I welcomed the opportunity to share my love of teaching with others. I have a wide experience of teaching in Middle, secondary and upper schools. On a part-time basis, I have been studying for a Master's degree in the teaching of Modern Languages through Language and Literature at London University with a view to entering teacher training as soon as possible thereafter.

**LICENSED TEACHER**

L joined our school part way through the Autumn Term of 1990 as an instructress. At 24, she had been a Foreign Language Assistant for a year and had already worked in a private school before joining Manshead, an upper school on the outskirts of Dunstable. L was not part of the licensed teacher scheme until September 1991 and it was from this point that we began to work closely together.

The staffing situation was such, during L.'s first year at the school, that neither she nor I had spent much time in observation and discussion. She joined Manshead at the same time as a probationary teacher but it was clear that joint counselling sessions would not be possible; from the point of view of the timetable and the personalities involved. The probationary needed a very different programme of support from L who seemed to feel intimidated in her presence. It was, moreover, my first year as Head of Faculty and only my second in an Upper School and I, too, had much to learn! L and I both, therefore, welcomed the chance to take part in the licensed teacher scheme when the opportunity arose in 1991.

**LOCATION**
Manshead is an upper school on the outskirts of Dunstable, with a population of approximately 700 students. Following a change of policy in 1990, all students are expected to study a foreign language up to the age of 16. This, in conjunction with very sweeping changes in the approach to teaching modern languages, has meant a complete restructuring of the scheme of work.

Manshead has a strong academic and sporting tradition, but it would be fair to say that the Modern Languages Faculty has encountered serious problems in staffing terms over the past five years. The school intake is largely white and middle class unlike many other schools in the Luton area. The pupils are, for the most part well-motivated and parental support is generally good. Problems have arisen in the Modern Languages Faculty because of acute staffing shortages and the consequent lack of continuity caused by over reliance on supply cover.

The Modern Languages Faculty is housed in a block that is shared with English Faculty. There are three classrooms for Modern Languages, only two of which are suitably equipped for use with the mini-lab: this consists of a series of tape-recorders and head-sets for class use. Because there are four full-time teaching staff in the Faculty, frequent room changes are necessary. It is not possible for staff to have their own teaching base. However, resources; books, tape recorders, computers etc. are in good supply following a review of equipment needs over the past two years. The Faculty's Scheme of Work had to be completely rewritten to encompass school policy changes and to reflect a dramatic emphasis away from the traditional grammar led course towards a more child-centred "communicative" approach.

MENTORING ACTIVITY

I am a firm believer in the value of learning "on the job" so long as there is sufficient time for planning, observation and reflection. This framework of triple cycles was a feature of the Bedfordshire Programme that I found useful in organizing the mentoring set-up in school. Without this rigid framework I would not know how to turn what might be called an ability to recognize good practice into an ability to encourage good practice in others.

I found the introductory session of the mentoring programme most useful in this particular respect. I think the paradox of learning (Schon/Bass 1991) holds true for mentor and licensed teacher alike:

"The paradox of learning is this: that a student (Licensed teacher/mentor) cannot at first understand what he needs to learn, can learn it only by educating himself, and can educate himself only by beginning to do what he does not yet understand."

When I considered the task in front of L and myself, I realised that it was as well that we had a detailed handbook and series of check-lists to refer to. I did find it confusing that the competence areas overlapped and I was not sure where to start. Should we begin with the first three preparatory competence identified in the handbook? I was concerned that if I did so I would be neglecting more urgent needs. It seemed pointless to be discussing the environment for learning when L was desperately asking for help with as she put it whole classes refusing to be co-operative.

Some of the pupils were openly making fun of her. There were times at the beginning of the year in particular, when she was very depressed indeed and this was having a serious effect on her health. She wanted me to go in and act as a policeman in the class so that she could teach. fly predecessor as Head of Faculty had done just this for his staff but I sensed that this encouraged dependence. What I was aiming at was rather to promote the development of, sufficient sensitivity and skill to note very low level signals coming from the pupil."(P.68 The Teacher and Counselling D. Hamblin) In other words, I wanted to help L to recognise the stirring of a difficulty before she was faced with a full-scale problem that she could not handle.

I found that if I concentrated on classroom control we would do little else in the time available for mentoring than consider an seemingly endless tail of woe. Clearly, this was bad for the
morale of both of us and I was also concerned that the tone of our discussions would not be one, "of equals comparing notes and views, (but rather me) telling a colleague how to teach better."(P.132 Essential Teaching Skills, Kyriacou 1991)

It was obviously essential that we should work together as a team and so L and drew up a plan for the Autumn Term. Though we asked for a meeting with a representative of the L.E.A. and senior staff at Manshead, in order to verify our plans, none materialised. We organised a provisional plan between us and submitted it as his training plan. It would have helped us both, in the early stages if we had been given some feedback and advice about our training plan.

With a very heavy teaching load for both of us, L and I were given insufficient time to carry out our plans properly. L had just three non-contact periods per week and I had four in which to run a Faculty of three departments: French, German and Spanish. The problems were aggravated by not having a second in command and almost daily staff absences (some clearly stress related) within the Faculty.

We decided, nevertheless, to cover three competence areas in the first term: Use of planning framework, Teaching performance and Lesson organisation

Every area was disrupted in some way through staffing shortages and L and I decided to use our sessions as a preliminary to further study later in the year. We visited each of the three areas, acquainting ourselves with the content in cycles of planning, observations and debriefing discussions. The disruptions caused a fragmentation of our studies and reading through my notes now the lack of continuity is obvious.

MENTORING TRAINING SESSIONS

These were organised at Challney Boys School in Luton on a monthly basis. I was not able to attend all of the sessions because they coincided with my M.A. studies.I will refer to two of the sessions in detail within this reflective log:

13 November: Resources: Development and Management
11 December: Behaviour

MENTORING ACTIVITY : RESOURCES

L was in the habit of arriving at school at 7.30 a.m. or even earlier and spending many hours preparing hand written work sheets. I felt that if she was happy to do this and had sufficient time without jeopardising other commitments in a heavy work programme there would have been no problem. This was not, however, the situation. Sometimes when I arrived in school she was clearly distressed and tired. "I must be crazy spending all this time preparing work sheets. The kids don't appreciate it."

I wanted to help her to make better use of her time. I had to this subject of resources with L. I knew that I would have to tread carefully (following Kyriacou' 5 advice,P.132 "you must be extremely careful and sensitive in how you communicate your feedback to your colleague.") because this was an area that was particularly important to L. Though we had plenty of books containing virtually the same content as L's worksheets, the latter were personally organised. It was clear that this was an area where she felt could exert control and was also an area where she was being judged as a teacher.

I am no longer in the habit of producing lots of work sheets so I could not, I felt, organise a discussion where we compared notes. I did not want to say, "Why waste time making your own sheets when this book has got a similar exercise?" I would say to L, "Have you tried the exercise on page X....Derek was using it last week. He said it was useful. It might be worth having a chat to him....." Knowing that L greatly respected Derek's judgement, this ploy did work. However, I did not want to discourage L from making worksheets altogether; I wanted to see her under less pressure and producing a more professional finished article.
The session at Challney gave me some ideas. We were encouraged to find ways of making our resources re-usable. Divided into groups, we discussed ways of storing materials to keep them not only accessible but, more importantly, in good condition. Below a list of suggestions for suitable storage gleaned from Mike and other members of my group, I wrote, HAVE NEXT(underlined) SESSION ON RESOURCES WITH L. Clearly, this area meant a lot to me too!

I jotted down details of some graphics books that were mentioned in discussion. I had never seen anything like them and I thought that they might give a more professional "feel" to L's sheets. When I returned to school I made some enquiries and found that our reprographic department did have something similar. Excited by the discovery, I told L. She did not seem very interested. I think because the import of professional logos etc. would have made her own work less personal.

L and I discussed the hand-out that I had been given, "Producing interesting resource material." L became more interested. "I suppose I could try using the computer to make work sheets..." Some of the children had come to see me because they had been in trouble for not working from L's sheets. "I couldn't read it...it was blurred...she threw me out when I said so...". L's own suggestion to use the computer was good news.

At the Challney session, I was particularly interested to learn about the "thirds system adopted by O.U.P. We had just taken delivery of a new set of O.U.P. text books entitled "Francoscope" L and I looked at the lay-out at our meeting. "When I make my next worksheet, I'm going to try that." I said. "Yes, it looks much better than this one," said L reaching for one of her own. She then started to plan out how to give the same information in a different format.

In March L and I looked at Resources in depth. Following the Challney inset it had been discussed in unstructured" time and we decided to undergo a cycle of planning, observation and subsequent discussion centred around a year nine class taking French. It was members of this class who had complained to me that they could not understand the worksheets.

March 16: Planning session

10.50 a.m. L and SJF in SJF's office which doubles as resources storage for GCSE topic materials.

L and I used the handbook and info. sheet from Challney (Resource management) to check on our Faculty's performance. Problem: nobody has own store-room or cupboard area. L's shelves in other office? Tidy, but I suggest storing work sheets in wallet folders. L decides to do this. Discussion moves to consider GCSE resources in my office. Problem: files used by all staff and not all returned. Made a move to turn discussion away from, "Let's complain about X's untidiness." Ask how can we operate more efficient system. Again complaints. Will raise this in general at next Faculty meeting and have quiet word with person concerned. SJF anxious to move on to plan lesson.

SJF refers to pleasing but unfinished display mounted by L in next room. Has Year 9 French class finished their contribution. Shift of emphasis works. L has been absent thus work unfinished. I decide to reinforce notion of joint responsibility for resources and appearance of Faculty to dissuade L from being too critical of X. All of us are under too much pressure for rivalry. Discussion moves to storage of text books in next room. We agree on joint responsibility. I wonder, Should I ask one person to assume responsibility for resources? All staff too busy already. Next year I will delegate from the outset.

SLJ asks L which resources she will use in lesson to be observed.
L not decided. Lesson in two days time. SJF and L discuss possibilities: video, mini-lab, I.T. Lesson to be in B4: no mini-lab and L doesn't have suitable video extract. SJF suggests keeping track of suitable video resources. L suggests putting note in with 095K topic materials. Great idea and good to see her pleased when her ideas accepted. ..suggest L mentions this at next Faculty meeting (Empowering ref. Heron) L decides to use drawings for lesson with year 9 French SJF agrees and suggests L might find other resources too?

11.25 a.m. end of meeting.

March 18: Lessons 1-2 Year 9 French SJF observes L

9.05 a.m. Class arrives, noisily. L unwell and struggling. How to assess resources when class playing up? Class trouble maker (AR) arrives late so I intervene as L clearly angry. Need to see resources not Just behaviour area this lesson. Class settles. SJF unhappy policeman! Deal with my feelings later CONCENTRATE. L explains has been ill so not all books marked. Class uneasy. Will mention this later in debrief. L makes arrangements to collect unmarked books: good! I can reinforce this.

9.15 a.m. lesson teacher-led. OK but why draw pictures on board? Too easy for class to take advantage. Will remind L about reusable flash-cards.

9.25 a.m. L uses tape-recorder. Clear, good volume. Will note this.

9.35 a.m. Pupils reluctant, "Do we have to write that down?" L doing too much of the work. Needs resource management to be more child centred.

9.45 a.m. Good! Group work. Why not put gap-fill sentences on board so L can circulate? Too tied in to individual pupils. Too many opportunities for class to opt out.

Remainder of lesson: more gap work. Need more variety. Also why not give guided listening passages? Just listening without focus is boring and pointless for some.

10.00 a.m. Too little participation by some of class. Others working well.

10.10 a.m. lesson ends. Resources ok and appropriate on the whole L seems reasonably happy. Have to wait till after school to discuss this one. Wish it was sooner!

March 19 Twilight Session 3.40p.m.

L and I discuss yesterday's lesson. L wants to spend time discussing AB and poor behaviour of some of the class. I decide to let her talk and then lead into discussion on resources. L resists.....lesson has only worked because I was there keeping control. I focus on use of tape. Her confidence rises. Good exercise, well chosen. Liked the way you did the group work. How about some exercises for the kids to use during the tape: grids? L agrees and suggests content for grids. We're off! I suggest using flashcards. L agrees. She had intended to do so but too unwell to prepare them. I should have thought of that...

We talk about trying competitions to involve the whole class L agrees then worries about class control again. I try to explain that good resource management will help class control. L agrees. I suggest L comes to watch me teach and appraises my use of resources. We fix up for April 8. A good cycle this.

April 8 Session cannot take place. Whole Faculty still on timetable AND running GCSE orals in non-contact time. All mentoring has to be cancelled until end of GCSE orals (May 22). L and I very frustrated and tired!
It is now July. L still spends many hours making worksheets. The hand drawn ones have well
drawn illustrations with the format roughly (and sometimes precisely!) divided into thirds. L
uses our computer not only to make worksheets that are carefully stored in a common resources
pool, maintained by L herself. She now produces really well designed exam papers too.

The pupils have stopped complaining that they cannot read the sheets, though the content is still
sometimes too difficult foe the whole class to follow. L has been observing mixed-ability
classes and is rapidly coming to terms with the necessity to produce open ended work that will
stretch all ability levels. This is an area that we will spend more time on next year.

With more time to devote to in-service training now that the exams are over, I suggest to L that
we bring in a computer expert to give us all some help. She seems interested but does not want
to set the agenda for the training. I know that she wants to make Banda master copies on the
computer and suggest this as a focus. To my delight and obviously to hers too she presents me
with a computer made master; the day before the session is to run! I suggest in passing, to Sally,
another member of the Faculty that she might like to ask L to teach her how to do this. L does
so, happily.

We set another agenda by negotiation across our team for the inset with the computer. Though I
was called in to a meeting with the Headmaster I heard that it was very useful.

MENTORING ACTIVITY : BEHAVIOUR

When I attended the inset session at Challney, it struck me that it would have been useful to
have had a video input as a starting point for discussion. L had similar feelings about the
training sessions that she attended in Bedford. We could usefully then use copies of the video
to spark off our planning sessions in schools on this competence area. IT would have helped to
look at pupils in a school other than our own.

I did, however, find it very useful to hear what other people in my group considered to be poor
behaviour. Some said "Pupils talking in class when they should be writing." It struck me that if
they were talking in French even while supposed to be writing, that I would be delighted! The
point I am making is that this is a far more difficult area to give advice on than, for example,
resource management. I was relieved to see that the promotion of good behaviour is a part of the
stated criteria for several of the areas of excellence including

Classroom control
Rapport with pupils
Lesson organisation
Pastoral competence.

The subject of Behaviour did constantly recur in my mentoring sessions with L. Realising that
without good class control effective teaching cannot take place, I knew that I must be ready to
study not just the competence area designated for particular study, but this cross-curricular
theme too.

Frequently, L had behaviour problems in her classes. There were recurrent names but I was
more worried by the frequency with which she was punishing groups of students. It became
, eventually a kind of game to see how many of them could get into detention. It was all very well
getting Ted Wragg's list of ground rules in the Challney session, but I could not pass this on to
L or the number of whole class punishments would have risen sharply.

This is a summary of how we dealt with the problem over the year:

When L came to tell me about behaviour problems from a group of pupils I asked her to write
me a list of names. Together, we then allocated a kind of score according to the degree of
misbehaviour and disruption caused. So, at first L would say, "Class X was dreadful today." After
discussion we would identify maybe ten names of trouble makers. I remember asking L if
they all deserved the same degree of punishment. NO, but they all deserved punishment. We agreed that she would set extra homework backed up with a Faculty letter for the hanger-on. Eventually, therefore, we got to consider the hard core of two or three.

L was very unsure about this system at first but I asked her to try my approach. We saw the few real trouble makers together as I wanted L and the offenders to see that we were a team. I contacted parents and explained that their children would be on report. L could not have dealt with this stage without getting very upset, but I asked for her advice as to what should be said to the parents so that she was still personally involved. This system, though time consuming has worked well.

In one formerly very difficult class, we have narrowed down the trouble causing to one individual (AF) I have had to exclude him from L's lessons and his head of year and I are working with him, out of lessons.

This is an extract from one of La's class misbehaviour reports:

Many students went at the beginning of the lesson to sit where they wanted. I said everybody to sit according to the class plan.
Many refused to move straight away. List of trouble makers:
CS (gave him detention)
Refused to move at first arguing.
Al (gave him detention and sent him to head of year)
Slammed down his bag, picked up a chair and slammed it on the floor. I sent him out of the classroom. He refused my authority, at first. He came back to the classroom without consent.......He sat down on his chair by the door. "Tell me in front of the class what I did wrong!"and I said, "This is no concern to the others. I will talk to you later with Nr. P. (Head of Year) present." He say, "You say that because you are scared." He finally went out. BM (gave him detention)
Extremely rude, no work. At the beginning of the lesson, I asked the class to be quiet and listen to me. He said, "No, we don't listen to you, you listen to us!"
AL (gave him detention)
No work, a lot of talking. He did not attend lunchtime detention last Friday and because of that and his bad behaviour on Monday, I gave him a letter to his parents.

There was a further list of six students, given detention but with no details about their misbehaviour.

It came in early June, when we had just started mentoring after the orals. We had both been taken off some of our non-exam classes in order to finish examining and consequently, some classes, including this one, had been disrupted.

We replaced the planned mentoring session to deal with this problem. I know at first sight it struck me as a step backwards. L's class control was so much stronger than at the beginning of the year yet here she was in direct confrontation with several pupils. This was, however, a significant step forward in many ways. Instead of internalising the problem with this class, she had written a detailed report. She would probably have broken down in despair earlier in the year, and been absent~ for several days.

"At what point in the lesson did the class begin to cause trouble?"
"Right at the beginning."
"Was there anything different about how you started this lesson?" "No, they came in as usual."
I didn't want to state what appeared to be the obvious flash point, namely that L was going in too hard with a rigid seating plan with a class that she had not taught recently. After the break in mentoring, I was wary of being too prescriptive
(Heron) and it was essential for L to take on the process of "reflection-on-action" (Schon) I wanted to re-establish our friendship, our equality and was well aware that it was much easier to see the problem as an outsider.

"Al is a real pain sometimes, we'll both go and see Dave tomorrow at......and get that lad sorted out." I wanted to reassure L that she would get support but I still wanted her to see where the flash-point was.
"CS isn't normally difficult is he?"
"No, but today he wouldn't move."
"Does he usually have to?"
"No, but I decided that I was going to decide where they sit today."
"So that was different from normal?"
"Yes. I suppose that was why they were awkward with me." sure you are right." (Supportive counselling and L is relaxing)

From this we moved on to talk about why L had decided to introduce a new seating plan so far into the year. She wanted to try out the new found confidence that she was feeling on her most difficult class. Understandable but unwise. I find confronting difficult in this situation as I am worried about hurting L's feelings. But I've got to challenge what she has done; without sounding patronising. I have a range of options here. It feels right to say, "I can understand why you did it but it might be an idea to do this at the beginning of the year...with a new class?"

To my relief L agrees, "I was wrong not to do it at the beginning. Next year I will tell them what I want from the start. It's too late to do it at this point in the year."
I make a mental note to work on "ground rules" and pre-emptive strategies with L using my Challney notes from the Behaviour session way back in December. This isn't the time to preach!
We agree to work on this together ready for the new year. We both feel we've had a useful session and we are ending on a positive note.

In retrospect, I am not too happy with the way I handled this situation. As a mentor, I am a learner too. Perhaps I could have pre-empted trouble. I could have chatted to L about taking this class again. She must have been worried if she felt the need to go in so strongly. She needed more help with AF earlier. Now all I can do is to exclude him from her lessons.

With him excluded and punishments for the other pupils carried out, the situation is much improved. We met briefly before L took the class again and decided to drop the seating plan for now. A climb down maybe but we also discussed ways of improving class morale again. L would re-introduce some favourite games to get the class back on her side. She also decided to tell the class that the seating plan would be there at the beginning of next year.

MENTORING ACTIVITY THREE: USE OF PLANNING FRAMEWORK

We began study of "Planning Framework" in February and it lasted for three weeks. In the best tradition of a spiral pattern of Language Teaching we decided to revisit this area later in the year revising, consolidating and adding to the work that we had done in February. I will, therefore, describe the "double visit" to this competence area that ended on June 26.

In February, we were still without a comprehensive scheme of work for the Faculty. The French section was partially complete as was the Spanish but the German was non-existent and as the Head of German was absent for much of the time L had a fragmented Planning Framework in which to work. Eventually L produced the scheme of work for German and was closely involved in the process of completing the French section too. Having been involved in the construction of the Scheme of Work, L was far more likely to keep within it and review it with keen attention.

Monday February 3
We spent a half-hour period discussing the Planning Framework section of the mentoring handbook. Problem: there was no comprehensive Scheme of Work for the Faculty so the section entitled, "continuity and progression within a scheme of work" would be difficult to assess. We did, however, discuss the LEAG GCSE syllabus that was in use with all three languages within the Faculty. L had a good grasp of the work involved in teaching to this syllabus because she had already used it for the year prior to becoming a licensed teacher.

I wanted L the chance to give some of her own opinions about how we might design the Faculty Scheme of Work to suit the incoming pupils from seven middle schools. In Faculty meetings L prefers to stay in the background when we discuss policy. She is concerned about the fact that she has not had a theoretical as well as a practical training and sometimes fights shy of giving her own opinions. Asking her now was, I felt, a way of empowering her to have her say on a subject that directly affected her.

L seemed hesitant to start but I decided to try and extract an opinion from her. I explained to her that my predecessor had wanted to give every pupil a common start (Heron's informative counselling) Had L got any ideas about how we could do this? It was difficult to get L to open up. She wanted to be told exactly what to do. I suggested the possibility of beginning the G.C.8.E. course in French for year nine students at the beginning of their first term at Manshead. L was interested. It might solve some of her problems.

She said that the pupils from Ashton were always bored in her lessons in the first term because they had covered so much more work than their new classmates. L highlighted the difficulty of taking students from seven middle schools which offered very different learning programs. She had spent time asking the students about their previous work and it was good to see her teaching me and taking the lead. I don't recall seeing this aspect of receptive counselling in Heron's list. It was a kind of empowering strategy.

At the initial session on 3 February we also set up our observation and debriefing slots for this competence area.
There would be two occasions for SJF to observe L and one for L to observe SJF. The other sessions were for planning or debriefing: all on the subject of Using a planning framework. Unfortunately L was absent for one session and so was I.

19 February
L and I discussed the lesson that she would observe with me teaching a year ten class. We decided to concentrate on the following sections of the competence area:
adequate differentiation for the range of ability relevance to a syllabus
relevance to a stated lesson plan
clarity of expected outcomes (criteria as in handbook)
content, method and structure appropriate to intended outcomes.

20 February
L arrives at my lesson with a new member of staff. Can they both watch? I agree but feel like a gold fish! Lesson goes well though I am aware that this is not my normal teaching style...it's a performance for an audience. I miss the usual rapport. I feel very nervous but I am benefiting from the feedback in L's facial expression. Must remember to smile like that when I watch her!

This is an interesting role reversal! I usually do the observing! But I'm really excited too. One of my shyest students out at the front of the class leading a language game. Perhaps having an audience is doing my class good!

End of lesson both observers very complementary. Problem: L has watched a show rather than go through a checklist on the use of planning framework.
24 February

Debriefing session to discuss my lesson.

Up until this point, L had little experience of group work. Some of her discipline problems were arising from making the lesson almost entirely teacher-centred. I could well understand her standpoint. It seems very threatening to relinquish control to a crowd of 14 or 15 year olds. Group work is such an integral part of my own teaching, particularly with my background in Middle Schools, that I found difficulty at first in seeing why L did not use it. I guess I had forgotten that I had been taught to do it too.

When L watched my lesson in Spanish she saw me struggling to teach in my second foreign language; she saw me as a learner too. This was the first mixed-ability exam class that I had ever encountered and I was trying out techniques for trying to cope.

When we discussed the lesson, it was useful to see that L had identified some aspects that I had not considered in much depth. She commented on the fact that I explained not only what we would cover in the lesson but also why. I noticed that she was doing the same thing when I watched her later lessons. We discussed ways of setting targets within the Scheme of Work (at this time little more than the G.C.S.E. syllabus) and, perhaps most usefully, we explored some of the reasons for foreign language learning not only at Manshead, but in a nationwide context. From this it began to emerge that L was very sensitive about being francophone and that some of the pupils were all too ready to tease.

So our conversation moved in an outward spiral from the consideration of one lesson to considering the problems of teaching a foreign language in a largely monolingual country with all its inherent prejudices.

17 February

I observed L teaching a year 11 class. They were our most able linguists, all studying two foreign languages to G.C.S.E. level.

The lesson began promptly with the introduction of a new G.C.S.E. topic area: Transport. The first part was a well chosen listening activity but it lasted for nearly 35 minutes. Though the content was suitable it was too long as a teacher led activity and the class became restless after ten minutes. The follow up was good with blackboard work but I wondered why L did not encourage the class to supply their own titles to the drawings or why they were not working more independently at this point. I noted that L was focusing questions on a pupil who had complained to me about being picked on and made a mental note to raise this later with L. (Heron would be useful here)

With too short a warm up at the beginning of the lesson before the listening activity the lesson content was relevant to the syllabus but not presented in the most suitable order. I noted an over-reliance on repetition by the class where there was inadequate feedback to check comprehension of the structures and vocabulary being covered. With a less docile class there would have been problems by half an hour into the session. The most able boy was whispering the answers to his friends and there was not enough practice for the less able.

At 2.45 p.m. I noted down that it would be wiser to do this kind of activity using the mini-lab with group work and to devote this session in a room without this lab to more interactive oral and written and reading study within the week's plan. At 3.05p.m. added, "GROUP WORK! at last! The whole atmosphere picks up until L says, Now copy down this list of words and learn it for homework. Nobody has had a chance to practise using some of these words and word lists are so boring to learn?" Mental note not to do just this in my own lessons.....Thinking out how to be positive in my criticism of this lesson when discussing it with L.
On the debriefing session on the 19 February, I was very relieved that I had made such detailed notes (over two sides of A4). I started with a summary of the positive things that I had seen in the lesson. I had this debrief carefully so as not to discourage L who was making a tremendous effort to plan every lesson in great depth. She is a perfectionist and sometimes gets very upset that she cannot do everything just right, no matter how hard she tries. I realise that she relaxes if I admit my failings too and will say, "I do X sometimes and it makes the class restless. Do you find the same?"

I remember watching another mentor at one of our training sessions with Mike. She was taking part in a role play with a rather awkward colleague... she was assertive but oh so tactful. She used "we" rather than "you"."Why don't WE try group work?" I'm delighted...L smiles."Yes, let's!" We feel part of the same learning process. I suggest target setting: why don't WE try more open ended exercises to stretch all of the pupils to work at their optimum level? Why don't WE do more group work? Why don't WE revisit this competence area later in the year?

PLANNING FRAMEWORK; SECOND MENTORING CYCLE June

The students in years 11 and 13 have left and as a result we can concentrate on the years that we did not cover in February. With a lighter timetable there is more time to devote to the mentoring process. L and I are both determined to organise more out of school visits so that we can have a broader frame of reference for our discussions. L is finding the inset sessions at Bedford useful for this competence area and so we have ample material to consider in our mentoring discussions and this being so she is ready to voice her own opinions in a way that she could not do earlier in the year.

I drew up a provisional plan to cover a four week period and we decided on the details between us as follows...

1 June: Planning Framework:

This should have been a session on resource development but L and I decide to return to Planning framework for the first mentoring slot after the exam break.

General discussion and SIF observing L with one of L's year 9 French classes (There was no time to plan for this session in advance but we both wanted to resume the mentoring activity after such a long break because of orals and decided to go straight ahead on the first day after the half-term holiday as a starting point for our final round of studies together this year.

I check L's lesson plans and verify that they are relevant to the LEAG syllabus. Glad that we are on course now after the orals. Too much disruption to classes. L and I decide to stand out for a two week blocked exam time next year and we'll ask the rest of the team to agree.

This is a revision lesson: appropriate for the first one after a break from the class.

2 June - 19 June

Further work on resource development ready to set up to meet next year's demands (Stock orders due NOW!)

22 June: Use of Planning Framework:
Introductory session for this cycle and planning for SJF to observe L with year 9 during this week. We agree our mentoring calendar as follows......
Pause for reflection!
(I'm getting better at planning this. We have time to cover the competence area horizontally" in terms of year groups. This is more useful than working "vertically" through the competence areas in the handbook. We visit each subdivision of the competence area for each year; time-consuming but L and I are feeling much more confident about the relevance of our work to individual classes. Will this be possible next year? With two licensed teachers and a probationer, will there be time? Perhaps we will find that we've worked in such detail that next year we can get by on less if we have to?)

29 June: Use of Planning Framework: year 10

6 July: Use of Planning Framework: year 12

12 July: Use of Planning Framework: years 11 and 13 (i.e. planning for next year)

I decided to suggest tape-recording the planning and follow up sessions for the first week of this round in order to assess my own skills in mentoring and to enable me to approach writing this reflective log with greater insight into our respective roles in the mentoring process.

After setting the timetable, we agreed to study the theory behind the planning framework that we use at Manshead. Listening to the tape later, I was surprised and pleased to hear myself asking for L's opinion so often; my dread was to be too prescriptive and inhibiting as a mentor. (L and I had spent time going over Heron's six categories of counselling. L said that I used the full range; but I wasn't so sure!)

In this session, we talked about the optimum time for covering this area and decided that it was best at the beginning of a year and at the end in preparation for the next. So we will delay covering years 11 and 13 until September, when we know whom we will be teaching.

From this, we moved back to extend our previous discussion about teaching in a monolingual country, this time moving forward to consider the probable repercussions of the National Curriculum. When L asked me about SATS I didn't have the information available to answer her, so we discussed a possible three tier system for teaching languages for all:

1. For the least able: Graded tests (GAML) with short-term rewards.

2. For those of average ability: GCSE type Assessment leading to sixth form work with a vocational base (FLAW)

3. For the most able pure language and vocationally based courses.

This discussion was a conscious follow-on from one the day before when our whole faculty was discussing ways of offering a better languages programme. This is new ground for our Faculty. I want to put us on the map; raise our status so I must get every teacher involved in the planning stages as well as the running. If we talk now L and I can have time to consider new ideas before wider discussion in school. L and I then discuss the GCSE criteria for Modern Languages and then look at the N.C. recommendations where teaching will occur through "Areas of Experience".

When I move the conversation on to considering the role of Modern Language learning in our school we both feel that much needs to be done in raising awareness of our part in the overall curriculum of the school. She must feel an important contributor to this process. I need her support as much as she needs mine.

Although L is taking a much more active part in the conversation now she asks for my help in getting an over-view of Languages at Manshead. I help, then I consciously move back to act as
prompt rather than leader as we progress to consider in detail the classes that I will be observing. L knows them so much better than I do: she is my teacher now. I do not want to dominate this discussion: I want to boost L's morale by showing her that she is already an expert teacher in many respects. I want to draw out her own ideas as well as sharing my own so that she will become more self-reliant. She analyses well, but still lacks confidence in her ability to express her ideas in English.

We run over the outline of the lessons I will observe this week. L hasn't finished planning in detail but has a sound idea of what she will cover and how it fits into the OCS! prep. and the class' recent work. I should have allowed more time for this part of the discussion, perhaps. We must have the lesson plans ready to look at for the prep. sessions.

24 June

L was ill on the first of the two observation lessons so we could not compare her performance as hoped. She's under strain again with this course for German and a tremendous assessment load as a class tutor. I am trying to reduce her timetable next year again to give her sufficient breathing space. At last she is realizing that stress sometimes adds to her illness by lowering her resistance. We have spent a lot of time in discussing ways of preventing overload; it's paying off. She is prioritising now. I'm sure she will be stronger next year.

25 June

8.45 a.m. L saw me at morning briefing. I noted confident approach,"I want you to do role plays with me" (New venture for class and me: not a policeman for the first time) L remembering a chat we'd had about how to impress and disarm adviser watching your lesson: get him involved, so she is trying it out on me!

9.00 a.m. Year 9 French. A top set and L in her element! I arrived five minutes late and she was in full swing. As we had discussed at the planning session, she had begun the lesson with revision (Makes class feel happier as on familiar ground) The class is well warmed up. They were all joining in and enjoying the oral work.

9.10 a.m. As threatened, L put me on the spot; we shared a role play in front of the class. It's fun and the class are amused to see us in a new partnership i.e. me joining in too. We demonstrate what to do, then it's their turn.

9.15 a.m. The lesson flowing really well. Fits L's and department plan perfectly. A new boy threatens to disrupt... too familiar with L. Confrontation? No!( L doesn't rise to the bait... confidently and quietly deals with him. Asks him his name in French. He attempts to show off. Boy behind smiling: answers for him: he's supporting L so the rapport really is working. New boy backs down, part of the lesson now, soon smiling and trying to join in with others. Will complement L on this at the brief.

9.25 a.m. L doing work from board with illustrations. Asking class questions. The teacher led activity is still a fraction long, but L soon moves on to group work.

9.30 a.m. Not quite enough guidance for groups to function independently. Shall I intervene? Can groups cope with status quo? I sense no. I suggest a brief replay of our double act for revision during question work. No problem. The dynamic duo. strikes again! Glad I spoke up. Groups working well. L and circulate and check their progress. Lots of smiles. Observing this is a delight!

9.35 a.m. L checks class understands homework. Winds down lesson

9.40 a.m. Dismisses class on time. A real tour de force!
9.42 a.m. New boy at door, calls out, "Au revoir" to us, we all laugh together. He goes. Quick complement to L, "Great lesson! Discuss it later."

26 June

Once again I decided to tape the mentoring session; this one to debrief and assess OUR progress. The notes that follow were written as I replayed the tape. (Thank goodness for Spell Check!) This is a really useful technique as I could re-experience the emotional interplay between us as well as the factual content of our discussion. It might be an idea to suggest this technique for other mentors. I will certainly use it at least once next year.

We begin with a summary. We manage to go over nearly all the aspects of the planning framework. It fitted relevance to GCSE and to N.C. Continuity? Yes; and to shopping (present GCSE topic) and to directions (previous GCSE topic). How did L tie in shops to directions? She made up an exercise to link: Where are shops?

We look at Faculty Scheme of Work and we reassess how we will cover everything before end of year. L comments, "too much to do at start of the year." We note this to adjust S.o.W. I ask L if any surprises in lesson? Yes, they understood more than expected. I am summarising. L pleased. She points out, "The lesson was understanding, doing and applying": L reflecting and encouraging herself.

We go through each sub-section In competence area in turn. Cross curricular? Not this time; I suggest we do this next. L suggests a way of doing this; I suggest other ways by using IT. We are planning for using computers.I suggest we need more differentiation. L says not much possible in such a short lesson. SJF points out range L had used; speaking to new boy included right up to most able girl who was composing own sentences on board in front of class.

Now I am more openly critical and ask L to try to build in more variety "Your class was just beginning to wriggle." L excuses this, "It was a short lesson." I persist, "I even in short lessons, what about trying X ?" L agrees to try. We discuss group work. I ask L, "How can I give more help here?" Conscious attempt by me to really address needs of situation where L is only just using this teaching technique and needs to do more. L suggests more observation periods. I will arrange this and report back

We discuss appropriate work to leave during L's absence at German Course to fit framework of previous lessons and those to follow and then move back to discuss the lesson observed in great detail.

We laugh that reprimands class in English and then goes back into French I am pointing out something she has not realised. I will see if she has changed this next time I watch. We discuss how L dealt with new boy. I reinforce how impressed I was at L's miming of shops. I want her to develop this technique. L voice rises in pleasure. I move to point out differentiation in operation: at this point I point out her great use of body lang because this visual cue will help less able to follow meaning.

I then point out that she spent rather too long on teacher activity (20 mins.) L explains why then suggests better approach for a future lesson plan. I suggest that we incorporate re-run of dialogue. (This was where I intervened in the lesson). I suggest follow up activity. I am teaching L now, by saying that she should use more group work. L senses I am being judgemental. She seems unsure so I withdraw slightly to add," I haven't got all the answers, and then add "Why not try it?" Better approach, we both relax. I will follow this up when I watch her next.

r go on to suggest other approaches. L saying several times," Yes that's right!" I am being validated as an adviser. Now L talking about time of lessons and some activities only work at certain times of day. We agree. She's on the ball! I point out I have heard girl commenting favourably on the lesson I watched. L pleased. Slight exaggeration by me but want her to feel at ease with class.
Best part of this mentoring cycle. We agree L has passed the assessment stage for this area at level four.

Then L tells me all about her visit to the M.L. faculty at another school; I am really interested. Her turn to counsel me (Heron: informative) I return information: I suggest that L reads a book by Rinvulucrini. It fits the style of teaching she has been watching and she wants to learn more.

L points out more efficient use of French assistant at other school (equal exchange of info.) Teacher was hyping up class ~ before visit, L very impressed by this approach. (Remember she was an assistant) I remind her that she did hyping like this in the lesson I watched (I am trying to reinforce her good practise) I suggest we try other ways to motivate classes more effectively I am interested to learn that L also sat through a really boring lesson that she had observed. We can use this to talk about techniques. L very clear why the class was going badly: poor prep by teacher, negative feedback.

I ask L to summarise what she has gleaned from her visit and to suggest what techniques she will now try. I'm deliberately trying to draw out as much as I can from the visit and I want L to assess the value of it. She will try to use more flashcards. Can she have flashcards ready made? (This marks a step forward too: less time and stress spent producing own materials) I inform L of Inset session that Sally (Probationer and excellent illustrator) will run within our faculty before end of year (I like sharing of skills as well as materials I ask L if she has read the book I lent her last week it is directly related to Using a Planning Framework. No not yet but she will read it by our next session.

Session ends with both of us feeling good. L has reached level 4 in assessment and we are both looking forward to getting to the top. We have exchanged lots of ideas. The discussion has been evenly matched. We started out with a clear plan for this cycle of mentoring and we have worked through it using the mentoring handbook to keep us on course.

All looks well set out for the next few weeks, but once again, we will have to change our plans but this time for the very best of reasons. L has enjoyed teaching her second subject to year 9 so much that she wants to teach more of this next year. She will be away at Salford University between 29 June and 3 July on an intensive extension and training course to enable her to teach German to G.C.S.E. level next year. We are both very excited about this opportunity because, within the framework of the Faculty and for L's future career as a language teacher, it was essential that she should develop a second teaching subject.

3. CONCLUSION

In the course of advising L I have had to place my own practice under close scrutiny. This has ,I believe, given me the chance to consider what I am doing from a fresh vantage-point. I am sure that I have learnt at least as much as L not only from discussion but also from two-way classroom observation. During the first few weeks as a mentor I was sometimes painfully aware that my own experience of Upper schools was lacking. In conjunction with my part-time N.A. studies which have given me the opportunity for a theoretical review of my performance I have had the privilege of a practical review. When I asked L for a summary of her opinions about our work together, she said she felt very positive about the programme which we had constructed between us.

I have an ambitious plan too. We want to make a video to show the three stages of the mentoring process in action. The mentoring course has been most useful but it would benefit from a video input. I am to meet Mike Fowler of the County Video Unit in September. I have to convince others of the usefulness of this project. Mentoring isn't just an activity that coincides with teaching...it's a vital ingredient in the provision of well-trained teaching staff. In short, it's a way of life and I am more than ever convinced that this is the way I want my career to go.

S. J. Fletcher 12.7.92