
This Handbook has been developed using the ideas and experience of Palestinian University lecturers, Palestinian mentor teachers and District Supervisors. It is based in international good practice, which has been discussed and agreed as being relevant to the needs of Palestinian schools and teacher education.

Who is this Handbook for?

Anyone who is involved in mentor training – this could be a University lecturer or a District Supervisor. District Supervisors should always work in communication with the University that is providing the teaching qualification for student teachers.

This Handbook is not intended to be given directly to mentor teachers. Each University will prepare their own Handbook for mentor teachers, which will give details of their teacher education courses and expectations for student teachers in schools.

How does it work?

This Handbook is a resource for training ideas. Trainers must select the ideas that will meet the particular needs of the mentor teachers they are working with. These will be different, depending on the experience of the mentor teacher and the stage of training of the student teachers in their school.

What kind of needs do mentor teachers have?

Mentor teachers have two different kinds of professional needs.

One kind is about their own teaching skills. Mentor teachers often want to know more about new teaching methods, especially those using new technology. These skills are important to support student teachers, but they are not enough on their own.

Mentor teachers also need to know about the skills of mentoring so they can develop student teachers' teaching skills. **Mentoring skills are not the same as classroom teaching skills.**

Sometimes mentor teachers do not realise that both needs must be met in mentor training sessions, especially if they are new to mentoring student teachers. **Trainers should include activities intended to develop mentoring skills in every training session.**

What does a mentor teacher do?

Being a mentor teacher is a skilful job that requires expertise in the classroom plus other knowledge and personal qualities. Although student teachers can often learn a lot from observing a good teacher, not all good teachers are good mentor-teachers.

Mentor teachers need to know the details of the student teachers' university course, and how this is intended to help them develop their classroom skills. Mentor teachers have a very different role if they are working with a student teacher who is on their first teaching placement, compared with their role and responsibilities with student teachers who are in the third or fourth year of their degree course. Each university will provide details of the expectations for student teachers in the different practicum periods.

Lecturers from five universities in the West Bank and Gaza have identified key words from several different definitions of a mentor. These are the words they agree are important for mentoring in Palestine:

- Experienced
- Empowering
- Developmental
- Thinking
- Trust

From these words they have created a definition of a mentor for student teachers in Palestinian schools:

A mentor is a trusted experienced person, who empowers another to think and do things for themselves through using a developmental approach

This Handbook will use this definition, along side key principles for mentor training that have been identified by the universities, from their experience of working with mentors in schools. These principles are closely connected with the key words and the definition of a mentor given in the box above.

- Establishing values and ethics for mentoring (person-centred values)
- Understanding how adults learn
- Developing positive communication skills: active listening, decreasing criticism
- Building professional relationships
- Modelling good classroom practice
- Developing skills in observation, feedback and reflection on practice
- Understanding the role of the mentor in different Practicum periods.
- Developing skills of analysing teaching
- Developing questioning skills
- Developing an understanding of a coaching approach & when it can be used
- Reflecting on values and ethics for mentoring

Mentor training activities should aim to reflect one or more of these key principles in every session.

How we design our mentor training sessions can influence how mentor teachers work with student teachers.

Training activities

If you are working with teachers who are new to the idea of mentoring, why not start by asking them what they think the role of the mentor involves, instead of telling them?

They will not know everything about mentoring, but they will start to think about it in order to answer your questions. You can use good questioning skills to encourage the new mentor teachers to add new ideas, or to think more deeply about some of the suggestions they make. There are some ideas for developing questioning skills later in this Handbook.

Why is this a useful activity?

If you start your mentor training by telling people what to think, instead of helping them to think for themselves, you may be giving a message to the new mentor teachers. You may be suggesting that they should be telling student teachers what to do and what to think.

If you use good questioning skills yourself, you will be encouraging new mentors to do the same with student teachers.

An example from Al Quds University

We ask them to first to identify their own strengths and weaknesses as a teacher. How will they help student teachers to do this?

We ask them to imagine themselves as a new teacher. What are the things you are thinking when you take the first step into teaching? For example, correcting tasks, planning etc. What helped you? What challenges & obstacles did you face?

This activity starts as individual thinking then they talk in pairs and then with the group (think-pair-share).

Why is this a useful activity?

This activity does two things: it helps mentors begin to understand part of their role, but it also encourages them to have sympathy for the student teacher, and to understand their perspective.

Important skills for mentoring.

- The ability to build relationships and develop trust
- The skills of professional dialogue: listening; questioning and explaining;
- The skills of collaboration in planning, teaching and learning
- The skills of modelling teaching
- The skills of classroom observation, feedback and target-setting
- How to use evidence to support assessment of student teachers
- The skills of reflection on practice
- The ability to develop leadership qualities in student teachers

Mentor teachers use these skills with student teachers on every practicum, but they use them differently as student teachers make progress in their teaching skills and abilities. Mentor training sessions should usually include input on more than one of these skills.

Mentor trainers need to plan training activities that will develop these skills and help mentor teachers understand how they can be used with student teachers at different levels. To help this understanding, trainers should share a model of student teacher professional development from international research. This model has been discussed with Palestinian mentor teachers, District Supervisors and University lecturers, who agree that it reflects the real experience of student teachers in Palestinian schools.

We will look at the model first, and then connect these ideas of student teacher development with the skills of mentoring, indicated previously.

A model of student teacher development (based on the work of Furlong & Maynard, 1995).

The model outlined here is set out as if all student teachers progress smoothly from one stage to the next. In reality, this is not the case. Many student teachers seem to move backwards as well as forwards through these stages – usually when they are experiencing a new challenge, such as teaching a new curriculum subject, or have an increased teaching responsibility. Mentor teachers need to be aware that this can happen, and to allow student teachers to adjust to the new context.

<p>1. Survival stage. Student teachers want to behave like a teacher. They may copy what they see other teachers do, or what they remember from their own time in school.</p>	<p>Concern with self-image and especially with their ability to manage the classes and keep order. More concerned about what the mentor teacher thinks than about the quality of their teaching.</p>
<p>2. Recognising difficulties. Student teachers are developing some understanding of teaching methods and the use of resources, but they do not always have strategies to overcome problems.</p>	<p>Focus on own performance. Student teachers will sometimes feel frustrated with situations and might blame the students in the classroom, or an aspect of the school for the difficulties they are experiencing.</p>
<p>3. Adopting a single approach to teaching. Student teachers become secure in using some teaching and classroom management strategies, but they cannot always explain or justify their teaching decisions. They do not adapt their teaching for different levels of student ability or need.</p>	<p>Focus on own performance continues. Student teachers may be reluctant to try out new ideas or approaches. They are not yet able to analyse students' learning needs. They may not be able to identify targets for their own future development</p>
<p>4. Looking at the learners. Student teachers become more aware of the learning needs of the students in the class. They begin to understand how their teaching behaviours influence the students' learning, and can explain their teaching decisions</p>	<p>Focus is on the learners. Student teachers are more willing to adjust their teaching approaches and to develop resources to meet the needs of the students. They can reflect on their own teaching and identify their targets for future development independently</p>

Please note that these Stages DO NOT correspond to the Levels in the RTTI/PDPTI. A student teacher at Level One could still reach Stage 4 of this model, working within the expectations of Practicum 1, although not all student teachers will do so.

Mentor trainers will need to ensure that mentor teachers do not confuse the stages of this model with the expectations of the RTTI/PDPTI.

The next sections of the Handbook look at each of the mentoring skills listed on page 3. These skills are inter-linked. A well designed mentor training workshop will aim to develop two or more of these skills at the same time.

The ability to build relationships and develop trust.

An important key word in the agreed definition of a mentor teacher is “trust”. Much educational research makes it clear that learners of any age do best when they feel secure and are not frightened or nervous (for example, Maslow 1962). Mentor teachers need to understand that while student teachers are adults who should take some responsibility for their own development, they are also learners who require emotional support to do this. The training activity from Al Quds University on page 3 may help mentors understand that student teachers need positive feedback as well as constructive criticism.

Mentor trainers should aim to reinforce this important point wherever possible, particularly when discussing feedback after a lesson observation and using the skills of professional dialogue

The skills of professional dialogue: listening; questioning and explaining

In this section of the Handbook we consider the important skills of professional dialogue separately, but in reality, mentor teachers will usually use them together when working with student teachers.

Active listening – clarifying; reflecting back & paraphrasing

At present, mentor teachers in Palestine do not have much time to meet and discuss with the student teachers in their classrooms. While we hope that it will be possible for mentor teachers to have a reduced teaching load in the future, it is important that mentor trainers recognise the challenges mentor teachers face in schools, and do not suggest unrealistic expectations for the time mentor teachers will have available.

This raises an important issue for good practice in mentoring. It can be easy for mentor teachers to spend the time they have available in *telling* student teachers what they did well or badly, rather than *listening* to what the student teacher understands about teaching and the students’ learning. Everyone involved in teacher development in Palestine agrees that the ability to reflect on teaching activities and their impact on students’ learning is a vital part of improving the quality of teaching. This is Standard 20 in the Professional Standards for New Teachers in Palestine. Student teachers can develop their ability to reflect on their own learning during the practicum if they are given an opportunity to share their understanding, and supported to develop this further.

Key principles for mentoring linked to these skills:

- Establishing values and ethics for mentoring (person-centred values)
- Building professional relationships
- Understanding how adults learn
- Developing positive communication skills: active listening, decreasing criticism
- Developing skills of analysing teaching
- Developing questioning skills
- Developing an understanding of a coaching approach & when it can be used

So, active listening is one of the foundations of reflective learning. Mentor teachers should be encouraged to give time for the student teacher to express their views about an aspect of teaching and learning as often as possible.

Active listening is positive and encouraging. Mentor teachers need to show interest in what the student teacher is saying through eye contact, facial expressions and gestures.

Active listening requires the mentor teacher to analyse what the student teacher is saying in order to evaluate the student teacher's understanding. The mentor teacher may need to check the meaning of some things the student teacher says, by asking for clarification or reflecting back some key points.

Clarifying (or prompting) questions.

These might include:

could you say a bit more about....?

I am not sure what you mean by....

When you say do you mean?

Mentor teachers should aim to keep these questions short and to use a friendly tone of voice, so that they do not sound like criticisms! The purpose of these kinds of questions is to help the student teacher continue their own explanation.

Reflecting back and paraphrasing skills

These help the student teacher know that the mentor has understood what they are saying. Sometimes it can be helpful to repeat (reflect back) a word or phrase the student teacher has used in the form of a question:

Student teacher: I thought the students completed the activity well.

Mentor teacher: They completed it well?

Student teacher: Yes, because....

To paraphrase a student teacher's account, mentor teachers could use phrases such as:

So, what you are saying is....

Am I right in thinking that you.....?

A simple **training activity** to encourage mentors to think about prompting and clarifying questions.

Prepare a set of cards with examples of different questions, such as the ones above or on the next page. Ask mentors to sort these into groups to indicate which questions are best for helping student teachers explain their thinking and which might be better to move students' thinking to a deeper level.

Ask mentors to add their own questions to the list.

Why is this a useful activity?

It encourages mentors to consider the importance of listening to student teachers, rather than on telling them what to do next. It promotes the principle that student teachers need to think for themselves.

Questioning – deeper prompts

As we can see, active listening also involves using questions, but these should be used to help the student teacher explain their thinking. The mentor teacher needs to listen and analyse the student teacher's understanding before they can use deeper questioning skills to move the student teacher's learning forward.

We have already acknowledged the time pressures on mentor teachers, so sometimes the mentor teacher will need to focus only on one part of the lesson, and use questioning skills to focus the student teacher's attention on a specific aspect of their planning or teaching.

Questions can be of different types, but mentor teachers are more likely to use "open" questions than so-called "closed" questions which ask for the recall of factual information.

Open questions can encourage further explanation:

Tell me more about.....

What did you notice about....?

They can encourage student teachers to justify their thinking:

Why did you decide to.....?

Why do you think/feel that?

They can encourage student teachers to hypothesise:

What would you have done if.....?

If you had access to ICT resources, how could you have?

If you were teaching this class tomorrow, what would you do next?

They can encourage student teachers to prioritise:

If you could change one thing, what would it be?

They can encourage student teachers to think creatively

What other ways could you.....?

Some of these questions can be used as part of a **coaching conversation**. This mentoring strategy will be discussed later in the Handbook.

Most of these questions can also be used to help student teachers to **reflect** on their teaching.

Explaining

Explaining how to do something in the classroom – whether it is how to use the LCD effectively, or how to teach a mathematics lesson – involves more than just giving instructions. Mentor teachers also need to be able to explain why they are asking student teachers to teach in a particular way, so that student teachers understand the reasons behind a teacher's actions, and can apply this new understanding in the future. However, experienced teachers do not always stop to think why they are doing something, because they are using the benefit of their own experience and some actions have become almost automatic.

Many mentors in other countries say that having to explain their own actions to student teachers is really helpful for their own teaching, even when the student teacher is not in the classroom. The process of thinking again about what they do and why makes them more aware of ways in which they might change or improve some aspect of their own teaching to make students' learning even better.

Training activities

Mentor trainers can help mentor teachers to practice the skills of explaining as part of training sessions that also increase the mentor teachers' own teaching skills.

For example, after introducing a new approach to teaching, such as using games in mathematics, mentor teachers can be asked how they would explain the idea and why it can help learning, to student teachers on practicum in their classroom.

Why is this a useful activity?

This helps mentors develop their own understanding of the new teaching idea, and also helps the trainer notice any misunderstandings. At the same time, it reminds mentors of their responsibility for student teachers' learning.

Remember: Trainers should include activities intended to develop mentoring skills in every training session.

How are the skills of professional dialogue used with student teachers at different times during a practicum period?

Using the skills of Professional dialogue	
<p>1. Survival stage. Student teachers want to behave like a teacher. They may copy what they see other teachers do, or what they remember from their own time in school.</p>	<p>Student teachers at this stage will usually need more instruction and simple explanation about what to do in the classroom. Mentor teachers' questions will usually focus on the student teacher's performance. For example:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Which part of your teaching do you think went well? What could you improve for next time?</p> <p>But mentor teachers should also encourage the student teacher to think carefully about the students' learning as well – not just about their own teaching. For example:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Which part of the lesson did the students find easy, or hard? Why do you think that was?</p>
<p>2. Recognising difficulties. Student teachers are developing some understanding of teaching methods and the use of resources, but they do not always have strategies to overcome problems.</p>	<p>Mentor teachers can use active listening skills, to help the student teacher explain what they are finding difficult. This will help the mentor teacher to give suitable advice, and to explain how to overcome the difficulty. If there is time, mentor teachers might ask the student teacher to clarify a point, or they could reflect back or paraphrase something the student has said. These skills can sometimes help the student teacher find their own solutions to difficulties.</p>

<p>3. Adopting a single approach to teaching.</p> <p>Student teachers become secure in using some teaching and classroom management strategies, but they cannot always explain or justify their teaching decisions. They do not adapt their teaching for different levels of student ability or need.</p>	<p>The mentor teacher needs to listen carefully in order to analyse the student teacher's thinking. The mentor then needs to use questioning skills to challenge the student teacher to think more deeply to justify their teaching decisions and to consider the needs of the students more closely. Student teachers should be encouraged to identify their own future targets. Any of the different types of open questions suggested above could be used, depending on the situation. Mentor teachers might ask the student teacher to try new teaching ideas using explanation skills to show why this is important.</p>
<p>4. Looking at the learners.</p> <p>Student teachers become more aware of the learning needs of the students in the class. They begin to understand how their teaching behaviours influence the students' learning, and can explain their teaching decisions</p>	<p>Mentor teachers use all the skills of professional dialogue to deepen and extend the student teacher's reflective thinking. They can use clarifying questions, reflecting back or paraphrasing to help the student teacher think more deeply. This is particularly useful when student teachers are beginning to identify their own targets for improvement.</p> <p>Open questions which help student teachers hypothesise or which encourage creative thinking are also useful at this stage.</p>

Remember: A student teacher at RTTI Level One could still reach Stage 4 of this model, working within the expectations of Practicum 1, although not all student teachers will do so.

The skills of collaboration in planning, teaching and learning.

Mentor teachers will work collaboratively with student teachers in every practicum period. The type of collaborative activity will change as student teachers gain more knowledge and skills in classroom practice, but the principles of collaborative work will remain much the same.

In the early practicum periods, the mentor teacher will work collaboratively with the student teacher to plan and teach the lesson. The student teacher will only teach part of the full lesson, so both the mentor and student teacher needs to understand each other's role and responsibilities at different times. Mentor teachers will use the skills of listening, questioning and explaining as part of this collaborative process.

In later practicum periods, student teachers will have more responsibility for planning and teaching. Now mentor teachers need to allow the student teacher to take the lead in planning discussion and in teaching the lesson. This can be a challenging experience for mentors, who are used to being in charge in their classrooms, and mentor training sessions should acknowledge this.

Key principles for mentoring linked to these skills:

- Understanding how adults learn
- Developing positive communication skills: active listening, decreasing criticism
- Building professional relationships
- Modelling good classroom practice
- Developing skills of analysing teaching
- Developing questioning skills
- Developing an understanding of a coaching approach & when it can be used

Training sessions could provide opportunities for discussion of real mentoring issues, such as the following example:

Training activities

Sometimes student teachers do not plan lessons in the way that the mentor teacher thinks will be effective. Should the mentor teacher allow the student teacher to teach the lesson, or should they insist that the plans are changed? Which decision will help the student teacher learn more?

At the **Arab-American University Jenin**, mentors discuss whether to intervene directly in a lesson if the student teacher displays incorrect subject knowledge.

How can the skills of professional dialogue be used in these situations?

Of course, there will not be one right or wrong answer to situations like this – mentor teachers would need much more information, about the class and the student teacher’s actual plans. Having the discussion would enable mentor teachers to raise these issues and to discuss what kinds of collaborative activity could be used.

We use real examples of student teachers’ planning as a basis for analysis by mentors. The discussion also focuses on ideas for feedback to the student: **Bethlehem University** .

All universities use “real life” examples like this in different ways. Mentors also bring their own examples to training sessions at **Al Quds University, Al Azhar University and Arab-American University Jenin**

Why are these useful activities?

It is important for mentors to recognise that there is no one way to be a good mentor. Mentors need to use their own experience and professional judgement to decide how best to work collaboratively with student teachers. Activities such as these enable mentor trainers to emphasise the important principles of person-centred values and ethics in mentoring, and to focus on constructive responses to issues, rather than negative criticism.

The skills of modelling teaching

Student teachers can learn by observing an experienced teacher modelling a specific teaching approach. However, this is not always as easy as it seems. Mentor trainers can help mentor teachers increase the learning potential of modelling and observation by identifying and analysing the different aspects involved.

Planning a training session on the skills of modelling can also provide a very good opportunity to develop mentor teachers’ own knowledge at the same time.

Mentor trainers should encourage the mentors to identify the different aspects of successful modelling for themselves as much as possible by using questioning skills. Below are some key points

Key principles for mentoring linked to this skill:

- Understanding how adults learn
- Developing positive communication skills
- Building professional relationships
- Modelling good classroom practice
- Developing skills of analysing teaching
- Developing questioning skills

which mentors should consider, but other good ideas will emerge through discussion.

- ❖ The mentor should be clear about exactly what aspect of the lesson they want the student teacher to observe closely. For example, this could be the use of questions; the use of visual aids or ICT or it could be a teaching strategy such as storytelling.
- ❖ The focus of the modelling and observation can be decided by the mentor teacher alone, or by the student teacher and mentor teacher together, depending on the student teacher's stage of development.
- ❖ As much as possible, the focus of observation and modelling should match one of the targets for the student teacher's professional development. This could be to introduce a new teaching strategy or to improve a particular teaching skill, such as questioning or explaining. The student teacher should always know why the focus has been chosen.
- ❖ The student teacher should be prepared for the observation. This will depend on the stage of the student teacher's development: the mentor teacher may need to identify questions for less experienced student teachers to answer, but more experienced student teachers should be expected to record their observations with less support.
- ❖ After the observation, the mentor teacher and student teacher will need time to discuss what has been learned. While finding time is often very difficult for mentors, it is important for mentor trainers to stress that this discussion is a very important part of learning through modelling.
- ❖ Mentors should use active listening skills to allow the student teacher to describe their observation before using questioning skills to help deepen the learning. Questions such as *"Why do you think I did..."* encourage student teachers to think more deeply about teacher intentions as well as observable behaviours. This helps student teachers move from the stage of *"adopting a single approach"* towards the stage of *"looking at learners"*.
- ❖ Wherever possible, student teachers should be given an opportunity to practice the skill or new teaching strategy themselves, soon after the modelling and observation session.

The skills of classroom observation, feedback and target-setting

Observation of teaching is an important skill for mentor teachers, as well as for student teachers. It is probably the most important strategy used by mentor teachers.

Mentor trainers develop this skill most effectively during training sessions by using video recordings of actual lessons taught by student teachers. Most universities will already have collected this kind of video material, and many student teachers also collect videos of themselves and their partners in school as part of practicum activities. However, some of these videos are very short and may be less useful for training purposes.

Video materials of student teachers are useful for helping new mentor teachers develop realistic expectations of student teachers at different stages of development – video materials using experienced teachers can create false expectations of student teachers' capabilities

Developing a resource bank of video materials for mentor training.

- Each video should be between 10-15 minutes long. This is enough time for mentor teachers to be able to practice analysis of the lesson section, and leaves time for discussion.
- Videos should cover different subject areas to give mentor teachers experience of observing lessons across the curriculum, not only in their own subject area.
- Videos should include materials from all stages of student teachers' training so that mentors can practice applying the expectations of the three stages of the RTTI.
- Videos should include different parts of lessons. The introductory sections of lessons often receive more attention from mentor teachers than other parts. While this is understandable, there are many important teaching skills that are not demonstrated during the introductions to lessons.

Supporting discussion following observation of video material

A number of mentoring skills can be developed during discussions following observation of videos.

These include the analysis of the teaching activity observed; the nature and style of feedback to the student teacher involved and the targets for future development that can be agreed.

All of these must be discussed in the context of the student teachers' stage of development. Mentor teachers need to change their own mentoring style according to the expectations of the Practicum and the experience of the student teacher.

A word of warning to mentor trainers!

It can be easy for a group of mentor teachers to find many faults in discussion of a video of a lesson. The mentor trainer may need to intervene to remind the mentor teachers that no lesson is perfect.

The real skill of the mentor teacher is to be able to identify the issues that are most important **and** that the student teacher is *capable of improving at this stage of her development*.

Key principles for mentoring linked to this skill:

- Developing positive communication skills: active listening, decreasing criticism
- Building professional relationships
- Developing skills in observation, feedback and reflection on practice
- Understanding the role of the mentor in different Practicum periods.
- Developing skills of analysing teaching
- Developing questioning skills
- Developing an understanding of a coaching approach & when it can be used

Training activities.

We use video to support training on observation and feedback. The workshop includes opportunities for self-reflection by mentors on their work with student teachers. We use open questions and group discussion to facilitate this. **Bethlehem University.**

At Al Azhar University, mentors discuss the difference between partial and full participation and they identify different aspects to be observed.

We use group activities to discuss what should be happening before, during and after a lesson observation. We use cards (or handouts) to help the discussion

We ask questions like “What things do you observe?” “How do you act during a lesson observation?” “Do you interfere in the lesson?” We use real examples – either video or case study. **Al Quds University.**

Universities also use “real life” examples to support discussion on observation, feedback and target-setting. Here are examples from **Al Azhar University:**

Sara is very shy and fearful when her colleagues or the teacher is in the classroom with her. How can the mentor help her to develop more self confidence?

How do we deal with the student who asks for teaching aids at the last minute?

They also use ideas from mentors’ own experience: how to respond to the “hyperactive” student who wants to do many very ambitious things.

Why are these activities useful?

Lesson observations, feedback and target setting for student teachers are central activities in mentoring. Mentor training workshops should include regular opportunities for mentors to practice these skills – even very experienced mentors will benefit from seeing new examples or from discussing new examples from real life.

Mentors can discuss what kind of feedback they could give to the student teacher, and also how they would give this feedback. This reinforces some of the key principles for mentoring discussed earlier.

Mentors will have different ideas about what the student teacher could do next and this discussion could provide new ideas for everyone. Mentor trainers will need to remind the mentor teachers about the different practicum requirements and how this will affect the targets that could be set

Using evidence to support assessment of student teachers

It is very important that mentor teachers can provide evidence to support their judgements of student teachers’ progress in the classroom. The need for evidence is as important for a single lesson observation as it is for assessment at the end of a practicum period.

Mentor trainers should include discussions about different sources of evidence in training workshops. Student teachers' lesson planning, mentor teachers' lesson observations and discussions with the mentor teacher are all important sources of evidence. Mentors could also consider the quality of student teachers' observations and feedback to their peers, and the reflective sections of the portfolio as additional evidence sources. Universities will provide mentor teachers with forms to record evidence from lesson observations, but mentors may need to keep other records to include these additional evidence sources.

Key principles for mentoring linked to this skill:

- Understanding the role of the mentor in different Practicum periods.
- Developing skills of analysing teaching

At the end of each practicum period the mentor, Academic Supervisor and District Supervisor should meet together to agree on the student teachers' level of achievement against the statements in the RTTI/PDPTI. Mentor trainers should include opportunities for mentor teachers to become familiar with the different levels of the RTTI/PDPTI during training.

It is very important that mentors understand that the **RTTI/PDPTI cannot be used as a rubric for a single lesson observation**, but that a range of evidence from different sources is required.

Training activities

With our new schools we start by explaining each level, we hand out the RTTI and discuss the portfolio. We use group discussion and brainstorming as part of this. We see "aha moments" when mentors link the different levels of practicum with the RTTI.

We ask specific questions such as "what is your role to help student teachers?" to check mentors understanding. **An Najah National University**

We use a simulation to complete the RTTI – who should do it and where does the evidence come from? **Al Quds University**

We discuss the characteristics of student teachers to look for – we have a list of 10 characteristics. **Bethlehem University**

Why are activities like these useful?

It will take several years before most mentors have a sound understanding of the different practicum requirements, and how the RTTI/PTPDI can be used. There will also be new mentors who may be meeting the practicum model for the first time. Mentor trainers need to ensure that all mentors have an over-view of the requirements of all practicum periods, so that they understand how student teachers are expected to progress (see Appendix 1).

The skills of reflection on practice (a key principle for mentoring)

Student teachers are required to develop a portfolio during each Practicum period. The exact requirements will vary between the different universities, but they will all expect student teachers to be able to reflect on their experiences in schools.

Reflection on practice is a very difficult concept for student teachers to understand. There is a great deal of international research which investigates how to support student teachers' reflection, so this is not something that only applies to Palestine.

Mentor teachers can help student teachers to reflect on their own practice through the use of active listening and the questioning skills discussed in a previous section of this handbook. The agreed definition of a mentor teacher, provided at the start of this Handbook, emphasises the importance of reflection on practice:

A mentor is a trusted experienced person, who empowers another to think and do things for themselves through using a developmental approach

We have already acknowledged that mentor teachers do not have much time to talk with student teachers. In these circumstances, it is easier to tell the student teachers what to do next, than to take time to help the student teachers think this through for themselves. Mentor trainers need to work with mentor teachers to identify ways in which student teachers can be given opportunities to reflect on classroom experience that are not too time intensive for mentor teachers.

Training activities and examples of supporting mentors' understanding of reflection on practice.

Many of the training activities already provided from universities contain opportunities to discuss support for student teachers' reflection.

At **Al Azhar University** mentors say that self -assessment is the starting point : What would you do if you had to teach this lesson again? Through group discussion mentors agree on 3-4 points that will help students reflect.

The portfolio is also useful and Al Azhar have reflection on practice in each task – mentors also have access to the portfolio and as a by-product, mentors increase their own understanding of reflective practice. They also discuss how the expectations from the RTTI can be used with students to support reflection on practice.

Bethlehem University find the RTTI very helpful.

Student teachers use the RTTI for self-evaluation. This tool really helps student teachers and mentors. It helps mentors see student teachers as future teachers, and they also use it for their own self-assessment.

An Najah National University have involved mentor teachers in the design of the portfolio.

Mentors have been involved in designing the assignments at each level of practicum. The practicum course has been re-designed as a spiral curriculum, where topics are repeated at deeper levels as student progress.

Why are these activities useful?

These are three very different activities, but they all provide opportunities for mentor teachers to develop their own understanding of reflection on practice, and to recognise how it can help student teachers become more independent.

Developing reflection on practice – more than just “what” or “how”

Encouraging student teachers to identify ways in which they can improve their own teaching is an important part of the mentor teacher’s role.

Firstly, student teachers need to be able to identify what was successful or needs improvement in a lesson.

Next, they need to be able to think how improvements can be made. This is not easy for student teachers because they lack experience of different teaching approaches. Mentor teachers may want to use **questioning skills** to encourage student teachers to work out a different approach for themselves, or they may decide to **model** a different teaching approach (see previous section). Alternatively, mentor teachers could offer two or three suggestions and leave the student teacher to decide on the one they think is best. This approach is helpful for more experienced student teachers, as it increases their repertoire of teaching ideas, and encourages them to think more deeply about the reason for their choice.

Using a coaching approach.

In the later stages of student teachers’ development (Practicum Four and Five) mentors should be aiming to support the development of students’ abilities to **think and do things for themselves**. Using a coaching approach could be a good way to do this.

Coaching is a mentoring strategy which uses open questions to help student teachers identify possible options for themselves. The types of questions on pages 6 and 7 in this Handbook can be used in this way.

Other questions might include:

- What aspect of your teaching do you most want to improve? Why?
- What will your classroom (or your teaching) be like when you have made this improvement?
- What would be the most useful thing you could do to start this improvement?
- What could you do about this in the next 24 hours? In the next week?
- What would be the first sign that this improvement is happening?
- Is anything stopping you from making this improvement? If so, how can you overcome this?

Deepening student teachers’ thinking.

Reflective practice does not stop at “what” and “how”. Student teachers will only develop into independent classroom teachers if they also think about “why”. They need to understand why part of a lesson was successful in supporting students’ learning, as well as why another part was not so successful. This may involve thinking about the content of university courses in psychology as well as subject teaching methods. Mentor teachers can help this process by asking questions which encourage student teachers to reflect more deeply on “why”.... and allowing time for the student teacher to think about this- perhaps overnight or by their next visit.

Key principles for mentoring linked to this skill

- Establishing values and ethics for mentoring (person-centred values)
- Understanding how adults learn
- Developing positive communication skills: active listening, decreasing criticism
- Building professional relationships
- Understanding the role of the mentor in different Practicum periods.
- Developing skills of analysing teaching
- Developing questioning skills
- Developing an understanding of a coaching approach & when it can be used

These reflective skills can also be developed when the mentor teacher uses modelling as a mentoring strategy and asks “why” type questions afterwards.

Mentor teachers need to be able to ask these kinds of questions about their own teaching in order to help the student teacher think things through. This is one important way in which being a mentor improves the mentor teacher’s classroom teaching as well as that of the student teacher. There is international evidence to suggest that this is a significant benefit of mentoring in teacher training.

The ability to develop leadership qualities in student teachers.

In this context, leadership qualities include the ability to take responsibility, the ability to take initiative and the ability to work independently.

This means that mentor teachers need to plan ahead to provide suitable opportunities at different practicum levels, and they need to stand back to allow students to engage with these opportunities. Some mentors may find standing back very difficult, as they are concerned about the pupils’ progress, but students will not be able to develop these leadership qualities if they are not given the opportunities to practice in a safe environment. Student teachers should be given suitable opportunities to develop these qualities as early as possible during their training.

A training activity

Ask mentors to discuss in groups to list possible activities that would help student teachers develop leadership qualities, apart from those that are already practicum requirements. One example might be to organise pupils at the start of the school day.

Which activities would be suitable for the early practicum periods, and which would be better used later on?

Some of the “real life” situations outlined earlier in this Handbook could also be used for discussion – for example whether the mentor teacher should intervene in a student teacher’s lesson.

Why is this activity useful?

These activities reinforce mentors’ knowledge of the requirements of different practicum periods, and how student teachers are expected to develop.

Creating a list of possible activities can also help mentor teachers feel more confident about giving more responsibility to student teachers.

Matching mentoring to the needs of student teachers in different Practicum periods

Each university should provide mentors with a Handbook which outlines the role of the mentor, the role of the visiting university supervisor, and the role of the district supervisor. The university Handbook should provide clear information about the important requirements of each Practicum period, including the minimum amount of teaching student teachers must complete, the subjects they should teach and the number of lesson observations which should be completed by the mentor teacher.

It is extremely important that mentor training sessions prepare mentor teachers for the expectations for student teachers’ experience in different practicum periods.

A summary of the expectations for different practicum periods is provided as Appendix 1

Many of the training activities already outlined in this Handbook are also designed to help mentor teachers understand the different practicum expectations and how support for student teachers needs to change along with these expectations.

Training activities.

If you are planning a workshop for mentors who have not had student teachers in their classes during a specific practicum period before – share the basic practicum requirements and ask mentors to work in pairs or groups to plan a timetable for the practicum period which will ensure the requirements are met (see Appendix 1).

If your workshop contains mentor teachers who supported student teachers on a particular practicum period in the previous year – ask them to share their experience of managing the practicum requirements, including any challenges they faced in doing this. How can these challenges be overcome?

Al Azhar University have held a recent workshop of different practicum levels.

One activity asked mentors to develop their own descriptors for planning at three levels and to explore differences between planning in Practicum 2 and Practicum 3.

This could be linked with other examples of training activity such as looking at videos of students at different levels and looking at real examples of student's planning and reflection and connecting these to the levels in the RTTI/PDPTI

Why are these activities useful?

All three examples enable mentor teachers to analyse the practicum requirements and to find ways that will work best in their own schools and classrooms. This increases the mentors' sense of ownership and develops their confidence.

Planning a mentor training session

As we suggested at the start of this Handbook, mentor training sessions often aim to include several areas of knowledge and skill at the same time. It will be clear by now that there is considerable overlap between the mentoring skills we have discussed, and that they do not need to be considered separately from each other.

We have also pointed out that training sessions can be designed to combine discussion of new teaching methods alongside improving mentoring skills. Below are some examples of how this might be achieved.

Training activities

A training session where ideas for drama and storytelling are discussed could include a video of a student teacher using story telling with a class. Mentor teachers would then be able to use the knowledge gained from discussion of the teaching strategy in order to analyse the student teacher's skills. They could make suggestions about the positive aspects of her teaching and any areas for improvement, including how these could be developed, for example through collaborative planning or modelling.

Mentor teachers could also create a list of questions to use in helping the student teacher reflect on her own teaching.

Bethlehem University held a workshop on integrated planning for mentors of final year student teachers:

They considered the objectives and outcomes of integrated planning and discussed on three levels:

1. Student teachers' planning for integrated teaching
2. Reflective discussion about the concept of the integrated approach
3. Consideration of some differences between how an integrated approach is presented by the Ministry and the approach used in our university

Why are these activities useful?

Mentors are able to develop their own skills or knowledge at the same time as considering how to support the development of the same skills in student teachers.

In the case of the example from Bethlehem University, mentors are also helped to see that there might be more than one way to use a particular teaching approach. This may help to avoid confusion between mentor teachers and student teachers during practicum.

Mentor teachers' developing confidence in their role

The universities who have contributed ideas for this Handbook have seen mentors develop in confidence over the past few years. Mentors working with the universities that have the longest involvement in developing practicum courses are now confident to identify features of good practice in mentoring and some are clearly ready to take on a role as mentor trainers themselves.

This semester we have had a workshop on how to be a good mentor. The mentors have developed their own criteria. District Supervisors were involved with developing these criteria as well. **Arab American University Jenin.**

Alongside changes to the roles of District Supervisors, these developments are an indicator of a sustainable mentoring culture in Palestine for the future.

Mentor training workshops will continue to be necessary for the foreseeable future, and these will continue to develop in scope and quality as universities and mentors gain more experience. This Handbook recognises and celebrates achievements of the mentors and universities currently involved in developing the practicum model.

The role of the university Academic Supervisors.

“It’s like an orchestra. Everyone works alone, but has to work together”

Academic Supervisor – Hebron University.

This Handbook has focused on activities that can be used in training workshops for mentor teachers. However, it is very important to emphasise that university academic supervisors are also mentor trainers on every occasion when they go into schools.

Practicum co-ordinators should make sure that all Academic Supervisors have a good understanding of all the areas covered in this Handbook. They should understand the purpose and structure of the how the different practicum courses fit together. They should also be familiar with the RTTI/PTPDI and how it can be used both during practicum for student teachers’ self-assessment, and at the end of the practicum for formal assessment.

University academic supervisors are the bridge between the university and the school. They bring knowledge of the contents of the students’ university programme into schools to inform lesson observations. As they visit more than one school to observe students teach, they also act as moderators for judgements about students’ progress. In particular, they can support new mentors to establish appropriate expectations for different practicum periods. University academic supervisors can also model good practice in lesson observation and feedback, especially in asking questions to help develop student teachers’ reflection.

Finally, university academic supervisors can listen to mentors’ comments in order to identify any gaps in student teachers’ knowledge or other issues related to the university courses in order to feed this information back to improve the university based courses. Some universities in Palestine already do this, and mentor teachers are then able to see how they are making a contribution to improving teacher education for the future.

The role of District Supervisors

District supervisors can act as mentor trainers in a similar way to university academic supervisors. They also see students in different schools and can advise on appropriate expectations for different practicum periods. Several universities already involve District Supervisors in mentor training workshops and it is hoped that this Handbook will be useful as an aid to District Supervisors in the future, as well as university mentor training teams.

Handbook prepared by Dr. Viv Wilson of Canterbury Christ Church University, UK in collaboration with colleagues from Al Azhar University, Al Quds University, An Najah National University, Arab American University Jenin, Bethlehem University and Hebron University