

MENTOR HANDBOOK

S1 | SUBJECT: STRAND OVERVIEW AND (RE)CONTRACTING

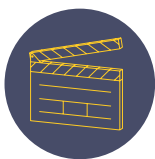
STUDY

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR THIS MODULE

Your teacher can make better instructional decision by understanding that:

- > Effective teaching develops pupils' mental models of the subject.
- > Effective planning is based on the school curriculum and the teacher's subject knowledge: this allows teachers to sequence and plan teaching carefully.
- > Effective planning uses and builds upon effective assessment: the information this provides guides teachers' planning and allows them to target support through responsive teaching.
- > Effective planning and assessment can be sustainable.

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SUMMARY BELOW:**

TEACHING CHALLENGE

Mr Mohamed is feeling increasingly effective at managing behaviour and adapting lessons planned by others. In doing so, his subject knowledge has been growing. How can he best use his developing knowledge to plan and deliver effective lessons which develop pupils' mental models?

KEY IDEA

Understanding curriculum, planning and assessment, as well as the relationships between them, is an important foundation for effective subject teaching which develops pupil mental models.

THE POWER OF SUBJECT TEACHING

Mr Mohamed's teaching can make a big difference to pupils. It can transform both their academic results and life chances: increasing the likelihood that they attend university and have a higher salary and decreasing the chances they have children as teenagers (Chetty et al., 2014; Slater et al., 2011). Lower-achieving pupils appear to benefit most from effective teaching (Slater et al., 2011).

The expectations a teacher sets are likely to influence pupils' efforts and responses (Murdock-Perriera & Sedlacek, 2018). Where effective teaching helps pupils achieve success, pupils are likely to display greater subsequent motivation and thus greater effort (Coe et al., 2014). There is strong evidence that effective teaching is underpinned by teacher's knowledge of their subject(s) and how to teach it (Coe et al., 2014; Ball et al., 2008). To make a difference to his pupils Mr Mohamed needs to develop his subject knowledge.

Subject knowledge is organised in mental models in the mind of the learner – a collection of concepts, knowledge, skills and principles which fit together to provide an overall understanding of an idea (Sweller et al., 1998). Mr Mohamed needs to both develop his mental model of his subject and consider how to best organise and use this information to develop his pupils' mental models. For example, he can consider that a common misconception in history is that a church is a physical building rather than a group of people and target this misconception to ensure his pupils gain a correct mental model when he teaches this.

WHAT IS CURRICULUM?

A school's curriculum sets out its vision for the knowledge, skills and values that pupils will learn. There are many reasons for educating young people, and these inform which curriculum content is selected (Wiliam, 2013). Selection should also be guided by the National Curriculum. The overall aim should be that material is selected based on a coherent vision for pupils' success. This is curriculum intent: the content selected to be taught and the sequence in which it should be explored, including how content builds in complexity or is revisited (Wiliam, 2013).

The school establishes the curriculum, but every teacher must also think about curriculum because they are the people who are ultimately putting it into practice. Mr Mohamed might not be writing schemes of work but he can bring content to life for his pupils. This is curriculum implementation: the instructional approaches, activities and resources specified to teach curricular intent. Implementation is therefore seen in both medium-term planning, individual lesson planning and the 'lived' curriculum of the classroom (Wiliam, 2013).

Mr Mohamed aims to use his subject mental model to implement the curriculum in such a way that it develops pupils' mental models of his subject and pursues the intended curriculum as closely as possible. This incorporates both the knowledge that he hopes pupils will gain, and the ways he hopes they will be able to use this knowledge. In doing so, understanding the school's vision and the reasoning behind its curricular choices will be useful.

WHAT IS PLANNING?

Planning takes the ideas of the intended curriculum and turns them into learning activities. It must therefore implement the curriculum choices the school has made, drawing on Mr Mohamed's subject knowledge. One way Mr Mohamed might effectively plan is by following five habits:

- > **Habit 1:** Break down your goal into the essential concepts, knowledge, skills and principles of the subject by analysing your assessment and wider curriculum goals for the unit.
- > **Habit 2:** Build on prior knowledge by linking what pupils already know to what is being taught and sequencing lessons so that pupils secure foundational knowledge before encountering more complex content.
- > **Habit 3:** Make the learning accessible by seeking to understand pupils' difference including potential barriers to learning and common misconceptions and discussing with experienced colleagues how to help pupils master important concepts.
- > **Habit 4:** Build lasting learning by planning for regular retrieval and spaced practice opportunities to build automatic recall of knowledge and supporting pupils to learn key ideas securely.
- > **Habit 5:** Increase complexity by providing opportunities for all pupils to learn and master essential concepts, knowledge, skills and principles of the subject, ensuring pupils link new ideas to existing knowledge, organising this knowledge into increasingly complex mental models through drawing explicit links between the new content and core concepts and principles and slowly withdrawing concrete examples and drawing attention to the underlying structures of the problem.

Mr Mohamed notices quite a lot of overlap between the habits of planning and content covered in the Behaviour and Instruction strands. There also don't appear to be clear-cut answers for how to implement these habits in his subject planning. He intends to discuss with his mentor what these might look like for his context, and how he can try these out of the next term.

WHAT IS ASSESSMENT?

To assess is to draw conclusions from evidence: inferences about what pupils have learned (Wiliam, 2010). Mr Mohamed might ask himself how much his pupils have understood in an activity, at the end of a lesson or at the end of the year. Effective assessment practices allow him to make inferences which truly reflect pupils' understanding. Effective assessment builds on a well-specified curriculum so Mr Mohamed's efforts at planning will support his assessment to be more effective and efficient.

Making these inferences can be difficult. Mr Mohamed must be careful that the inference he is making reflects what he really wants to know and that he is not distracted by poor proxies for learning (Coe, 2013). For example, not assuming that just because pupils are busy that they are learning. It also means recognising that pupils may perform better in the short term but then forget what they studied (Soderstrom & Bjork, 2015). To help, he should choose, where possible, externally validated materials – such as standardised test created by external bodies or groups of schools and administered in controlled conditions, perhaps at the end of the year – if he needs to make a summative judgement about how much his pupils have learned over a period of time with greater confidence.

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

Effective assessment can also be used much more frequently to allow Mr Mohamed to adapt his teaching and respond to pupils' needs. This form of assessment is the main focus of the Subject strand. Teachers can regularly collect information on pupil learning in a lesson, for example through questioning a number of pupils to check for understanding after conveying new content. They can use their inferences from this data formatively to adapt their teaching and respond to pupils' needs where necessary (Christodoulou, 2017). Evidence suggests that among the most powerful ways to respond to pupil needs is to offer feedback. Effective feedback is motivating, guiding pupils on where they have succeeded and what they need to improve (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). It also leads pupils to act to close the gap (Sadler, 1989).

There are many ways to give effective feedback and Mr Mohamed's choices should reflect what his pupils need and the importance of taking a sustainable approach. For example, he might offer verbal feedback or give abbreviated feedback using a marking code (EEF, 2016). These approaches are quick to do while giving pupils valuable information, encourage pupil effort and improve their learning. Mr Mohamed can work with colleagues to think about how he could ensure his assessment and feedback are efficient. He hopes to use it to support his pupils to monitor and regulate their

own learning (EEF, 2017), helping them to become successful independent learners.

LINKING CURRICULUM, PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT

For assessment, planning and curriculum to be effective, they must be coherent. For example, teaching resources should align with assessments – the tests pupils sit should reflect what they have been taught – and both should align with the curriculum (Oates, 2011). Equally, Mr Mohamed should avoid letting summative assessments – like SATs and GCSEs – shape all his planning. Instead he should aim to use the knowledge of his subject to teach and assess a coherent, broad and balanced curriculum.

NUANCES AND CAVEATS

No exam can test everything that matters in a subject. Exams 'sample' from the subject: they choose a handful of questions to test key ideas. This is an effective and efficient way to assess but if this guides all of a teacher's planning, they are likely to overlook basic ideas (which are implicit in exam questions), broader ideas (which lay the foundations for future study) and interesting ideas (Christodoulou, 2017). Mr Mohamed must avoid the trap of letting assessment narrow his teaching.

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COACHING CONTRACTING

WHAT IS CONTRACTING?

Contracting is a process that involves teasing out the norms, goals and ways of working that will lead to a productive professional relationship. It is a reciprocal process intended to develop shared expectations, establish mutual respect and pre-empt potential issues. This module serves as a starting point for you as a coach to reflect on the key messages you want to get across in this meeting and support to prepare effectively for it.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Contracting serves as an anchor upon which you base the foundations of the coaching relationship. Without these solid foundations, it makes the rest of the working relationship harder to build upon and less resilient when faced with situations or factors that will test this relationship throughout the year.

WHAT DOES CONTRACTING INVOLVE?

Contracting is used in many different contexts and across all different fields so there is a lot of variety in what contracting looks like and how it is carried out. Despite these superficial differences, contracting can be viewed on three levels:

- > **Professional:** Considers the aim of coaching in relation to the professional development of the ECT.
- > **Procedural:** Considers the practicalities of making effective coaching happen.
- > **Psychological:** Considers the perception and possible misconceptions of coaching, and how you might deal with these.

CONTRACTING MEETING

Meet with your teacher and use the following prompts as the basis for a coaching contracting discussion. Contracting is most effective when both parties (yourself and the ECT) answer questions for each other.

1. Professional prompts

- > What is important to you in your work?
- > What do you want to get out of this process?
- > What do you need from me to make this work well?

2. Procedural prompts

- > What is the best way for us to communicate and when?
- > When are the best times to meet for our mentor sessions?
- > What classes/subjects are best to observe?

3. Psychological prompts

- > What does an effective professional relationship look like for you? Can you give me an example?
- > What experience have you had of observation? How can we make observation an effective experience?
- > What experiences do you have of coaching? What might we need to do to embrace this coaching approach?

CONTEXT-SPECIFIC MEETING

In addition to contracting, as required, you may wish to meet with your teacher to work through any context-specific policies, systems and/or procedures that they will need to know about to be effective in their role. It is also important for teachers to be made aware of school-specific policies so you may wish to point your NQT to these and provide some time to discuss them.

Typical school policies include, but are not limited to:

- > Their responsibilities planning.
- > The school's behaviour policy.
- > The safeguarding procedures.
- > How your school assesses pupils.
- > Your marking requirements.