F: Years ago this school used to be loaded, where now we have a much smaller project, and schools have less money and especially computer science departments, they’ll have less money to buy those types of items which would be good in lessons, so it’s good then that a uni kind of… some kind of project like that-

R: Yeah

F: Can help out.

R: Yeah, like I definitely can- one of the things I was thinking about- with all of the different schools that have taken part, basically whatever the students requested is what the schools got, so some schools got buggies, some school just got micro:bits… it’s a bit.. rubbish that some schools haven’t got access to them… and they’re fairly expensive, they’re kind of 30-50 pounds each. By the time you’ve got enough to do something usable in a class, you’re looking at a couple hundred quid.

F: Even when Student8 came in, he brought five maybe- I suppose you’d have thought it was a round number, but in lessons you’d probably need about ten for it be worthwhile cause-

R: Yeah, I feel like there should have been seven…

F: Maybe he stole two, because there was only five when he brought them-

R: [laughs] I’ll ask him about that

F: -and it kind of works because we have five rows in our classroom, but it’s five rows of six people in a big long line, building one- and we brought them into the canteen hall there and they were using them in that way-

R: Oh cool!

F: Because, in the classroom, there’s not really the opportunity to manoeuvre them. I guess he was thinking, you can use them as a buggy, but in the classroom on a big long table, how would you even manoeuvre them? With keyboards and things on the desk, but I thought it was a good lesson and the kids enjoyed it and he’d obviously planned it really well, uhm, but I suppose the downfall was that the lesson was Friday-Monday-Tuesday, so he had no real time really… to reflect on it.

R: Yeah it was very chuh-chuh-chuh.

F: Well they had that one week off because he came for the wrong lesson, but I think… I was really happy with him, because we’ve had student teachers in the past who are here as trainee teachers, who’ve done teaching practice for three months and they come to us for their second one, like I would have done as a trainee teacher, and they’re hopeless. Whereas, at least the resources he created, or-

R: yeah

F: altered them ,or if they were given them, or if they did them all completely from scratch

R: No so they made them all themselves-

F: It was a good standard, uhm…

R: That’s really great to hear, because I mean, we did a bit of prep with them, we did a half day training, Computing at Schools came in and did some stuff… and that was pretty much it. I was just on hand to bounce ideas off, since it was Easter break and teachers weren’t around, they could just ping ideas of me and some of the stuff they came up with… was amazing. I asked them if they borrowed stuff from somewhere, and that was totally fine, but they were like “oh no we just made this up!” and I was like “oh.” [laughs]

F: The downside of that is that, as a student teacher you probably wouldn’t plan the three lessons. You’d plan the first one, and have a rough idea for two and three, see what happens in one… and then make a brand new lesson plan, cause you’ll know that thing that you thought was going to take half an hour only took five minutes, and the thing you thought was going to take five minutes too the whole lesson, or he reckons that he didn’t know that they’d used the microbits in the first place. So they had used them a couple of times before, whereas he’d planned to teach them how to connect them and all that stuff, and he could bypass or whatever-

R: Yeah

F: Uhm, but yeah.

R: As a general rule I told them to start off like the students might not know anything, because even the basic stuff is quite fun to begin with,

F: Definitely.

R: Uhm, so there’s a couple of things there that you’ve said that are quite interesting, that I just want to pick up on. So one of the things I’m thinking, rather than schools having to go out and buy equipment, is to start a bit of a pool at the university. Perhaps it pays for and maintains this pool, but then they can be loaned out to schools, for a six week scheme of work, and they would be yours to do lessons with-

F: Aye

R: And then, return them, get another kit, send them out. So you have ten buggies, and whatever lesson plans, some other stuff with motion sensors, and collect resources from the other students and put them into a central repository which can be used and tweaked-

F: That’s a good idea, I must say

R: So there’s 9 students, 3 lessons each, 27 lessons are kinda there. They’re not all going to be up to standard, but at least they’re a starting point.

F: Well, you see, now that Student8 brought in the buggies, at least I would know how to teach a buggy lesson, and I know roughly how they work, and its getting that exposure to that technology you know, if a school doesn’t own the buggies, then you’ll never use them… I think it’s a good idea to have a system like that.

R: That’s kind of something- we’d maybe start off with a google doc with all the things in it, and start building up-

F: Google doc is banned here at this school.

R: Not google docs then.

F: You’ll find a lot of schools networks won’t allow google docs for security reasons.

R: Yeah, another school mentioned something from a few years ago, they were explaining this to me… OneDrive then maybe?

F: Yanno, you say that and you just never know…

R: [laughs] I’ll try put feelers out and find out what might work. There’s got to be something cloud based, sharing thing.

F: You’d think but- schools don’t interact with each other, and if our IT policy is not to have cloud based storage or whatever, the firewall just blocks it, because I know another school- they have like a communal thing-

R: Huh that’s interesting, I need to try and figure out- there’s got to be some way, even if it was just on the university servers or-

F: A website, where everything is stored there and everybody can access, but yeah once you involve google docs and Drive, school IT policies mean-

R: Yeah, they just back off-

F: So you can make all of these brilliant things and nobody can really get at them or whatever.

R: Yeah, I know another teacher mentioned about google docs but OneDrive was okay for that school, interesting to kno-

F: Even Facebook, a private group or something, I mean, I’m a member of one for our exam board and people are always uploading files and documents, and that’s uhm, the firewall allows access to Facebook, but as soon as you start bringing up Google Drives and Docs-

R: I’ll definitely look into that, try find something everybody can access… uhm, so! The other thing, another interest, is reworking the BBC thing. It was a pilot, and it was very much a rough-around-the-edges-lets-see-how-it-goes type thing. So a couple of the other teachers, have been interested in getting the students in for observation- like, a day of shadowing, following some lessons, get a feel of what it’s like to be in a classroom. I don’t know what your thoughts are on that?

F: Before they do the lessons?

R: Yup

F: Definitely, I- I mean, of course you would, as a trainee teacher you observe for six weeks before you even dare touch a lesson-

R: [laughs] yeah

F: I know TeachFirst, now kind of assumes-

R: [laughs] well…

F: - that you can just go straight in and teach. If they’re a student teacher, fair enough, they’re going in and getting shown stuff, but there’s no harm- they’re not going to be any worse of by having watched a lesson or two… probably in the school they’re going to, so they know the layout and the dynamics of the room.

R: Yeah, yeah I think- my view is- I’m trying to propose this to the BBC and say “this would be a good thing to do”, but first lesson you go in and observe, you have an idea, you observe for two lessons and then as you get to know your class you can have a little bit of an activity in the second lesson, and then in the third lesson you can say “this is what you’re going to do, I know this class, I know this dynamic”.

F: When Student8 turned up for the first lesson, it was five minutes before at the front door. Fair enough, he said his taxi was late picking him up-

R: The taxis have been a nightmare.

F: Uhm, which meant that I was still teaching my lessons in period one and meant that I had to go get him and bring him into the room as the class were coming in as well and he’s not even unpacked, or set up, or whatever. So if you were coming here and observing, you would know that you needed to be here… 45 minutes before the lesson, not five, and things like that. Knowing the layout. It’s all good emailing back and forth, but you’d rather speak to somebody and say “look I think this went well, this didn’t go so well, maybe try this, maybe try that” and then they can go away and there’s no kind of confusion, because I guess there was you involved, me, TeacherB and Stephen, so there was a lot of- there were four of us trying to link, and you were doing your best to link everybody together, and then TeacherB had no idea what day he was coming in, and I had no idea what he was planning to do…

R: Yeah, so the BBC sort of came and said “here’s this structure”, and I was like “uhhh..”, so I had nine students to partner up with schools… My new plan would be to get a more solidified timetable, make sure it’s all laid out, partner up students and schools, and leave it up to students to organise taxis, give them a bit of budget so it doesn’t have to come out of their money, and then it’s up to them, because it was all from them, to me, to the admin, and then to the taxi bookings. I think that was causing a few issues, in terms of what was going on with taxis, and what to do if they didn’t show up, because I was in Canada at the time for work… just really bad timing… and I was getting calls at 3am saying “hey where’s my taxis?” and I was like “uhhhh”.

F: “I’m hammered, I don’t know” [laughs] That probably does make sense

R: Haha, yeah. I think giving the students a bit more control… I’m also thinking about how this might sit in the curriculum… It was an extra voluntary thing… I mean they get paid, but it was extra. Whereas, if I can get the students academic credit I think it would fit nicer in their work scheme.

F: Get your students-? Sorry I thought you meant the pupils in our school.

R: This is where it falls apart, yeah, the undergraduate students- how can we get academic credit for students, rather than just money. Maybe see about making it a little more long term, rather than just “bang-bang-bang, lessons done”.

F: Would they want to do that though? If they’re doing a computer science degree, could you put it in there?

R: There’s no requirement at the moment, but there’s an entire curriculum reform going on at the moment at the university for 2020 and I’m trying to get that put in, but at the minute there’s a third year module, the “career development module”, and across two semesters you can go out and do teaching or volunteering and get academic credit for that, you just have to prove that you’ve done career development and all those buzzwords. I think it would be great to allow students to get academic credit for it, because feedback from students is that it’s a lot extra on top, and it’s a cool opportunity to work with the BBC-

F: I suppose there’s lots of training involved, the travel, the actual lesson, it probably does add up to quite a bit to just be volunteering for it.

[This part of the interview was redacted]

R: One of things I’m proposing is an event at the uni, everybody just getting together, unfortunately not affiliated to the BBC, and say “okay we did good”, maybe in June or July, towards the end of the year, just when it’s less stressful-

F: After exam season, anything goes, I would go to that. Manchester would be too much of an ordeal, plus they would have to pay for us for cover- schools have to- Now when we organise days out we have to factor in the cost of somebody to replace us for cover, which is £250 or whatever, so when I hand in my absence form to the headteacher and she’ll say “not for a jolly in Manchester with four kids” so… I don’t even have the energy to try and arrange it.

R: it’s been a big thing- and it’s such a shame because the BBC have been organising for a good six weeks-

F: When is it?

R: The 18th

F: Of June?

R: No, of may.

F: That’s crazy, you have to get all the consent and-

R: It’s crazy, I’m thinking just something local, between the schools that took part, we’ll figure out something that works for schools.

F: Have you heard of Evolve? It’s the software we use, the online trip organising software that our school uses, and other schools may use-

R: What you would need to-

F: You need to go and fill in all these stages to go through, as you’re probably aware, the whole amount of paperwork you need to do. Even if we were just going to take a taxi to central station, there’s an approved taxi company with risk assessments

R: Risk assessments, yeah-

F: So might be worth finding out, if you’re planning anything, even just having premade the risk assessment for-

R: So if I were to ring reception and ask what was needed.

F: Well, I could- there’s people in school who are designated, in charge of that system, that would help if I needed any- you would go to see them first and find out what you needed to do. They’d say “you need this form, you need this, you need this.”

R: Yeah, even if we-

F: Even if you just handed through a premade risk assessment-

R: -we do have a lot of premade risk assessments, we have a lot of schools come in and do things, so it would be fab to just have everybody come in and not just four students. I mentioned it to my boss and he said “yeah, lets just do that”

F: I’d be more willing to go into town than Manchester, it’s a big journey.

R: Well, if you just forward me on to whoever for risk assessments-

F: I mean, if all your paperwork is preauthorised, to say you want to go to Newcastle or Northumbria and you want to take a metro and it’s all sorted, just click-click-click. Whereas, if we don’t have those things, I tried last year to organise a trip to the quayside with two sixth formers and I gave up because it was too hard.

R: Really...?

F: It was a chore to get consent forms, and if I wanted to drive them down then I would have to get business insurance for my car, and it gets to the state where people just give up and say “I can’t be arsed”.

R: Well if I can do the legwork for everyone and make it simpler-

F: And give all the dates and times, instead of just saying “it starts at 11 in Manchester-“ How do we get to Manchester by 11? But July, end of the month, you’re probably more likely to get teachers.

R: That would be cool.