CollectivED

Working papers from CollectivED; The Hub for Mentoring and Coaching

A Research and Practice Centre at Carnegie School of Education

Special Edition
Advancing Mentoring Practices
2018-19

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Introduction and contents

Welcome to our special edition of CollectivEd Working Papers focused on Advanced Mentoring. All of these papers have been published in issues 1-6 and we have collated them here to support your focus of enhancing your understanding and skills for mentoring. Please do read them and use them to provoke your own reflections and action. CollectivEd: The Hub for Mentoring and Coaching is a Research and Practice Centre based in the Carnegie School of Education at Leeds Beckett University. Since we founded the Centre in autumn 2017 we have made developed our networks, practice and research. Our aim is to support professionals and researchers in a shared endeavour of enabling professional practice and learning which has integrity and the potential to be transformative. We are interested in all voices, we will learn from many experiences and will engage with and undertake research.

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Details of upcoming events are as follows.

You may like to note the following dates.

- January 16th 2019 4-7pm (refreshments 4-4.40pm, and again midway).
  'Changing our schools from the inside out; Is this what we mean by Collaborative Professionalism?'
  This is a free event and bookings can be made at
  https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/collaborative-professionalism-tickets-51456157753

- July 4th 2019
  National Conference in Birmingham
  "The First CollectivED Knowledge Exchange: creating powerful professional learning through re-thinking coaching, mentoring and collaborative leadership in education"
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CollectivED Advanced Mentor Development Programme: transforming mentoring by design

A Practice Insight Working Paper by Rebecca Tickell

Working as a partnership lead for a large teacher training provider in West Yorkshire, I am primarily concerned with ensuring that the students we educate and train have the best school-based training and experience that they possibly can. It is of paramount importance that beginning teachers leaving us will have the qualities, skills and attributes they need to succeed in school or other educational settings. Ultimately, this will positively impact on their experiences and the experiences and the outcomes of pupils that they will teach. It is also imperative that they are able to enjoy their new careers, choosing to stay longer in the teaching profession which may help to turn the tide on the teacher retention and recruitment crisis we are facing in England today [4].

Mentoring in Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

In ITE, the role of the mentor is of pivotal importance in ensuring that student teachers gain appropriate, meaningful and constructive learning experiences during their school-based placements. A significant part of this workplace learning is facilitated by the mentor, who is skilfully able to provide the right blend of support and challenge, using their expertise to create opportunities for their mentees to begin to develop their own pedagogical practices. It could be said that mentoring itself is a circumstance of work [1], so how can we provide development opportunities for our mentors, potentially improving school-based learning experiences for our student teachers, better preparing them for a career as a teacher?

I think it would be remiss of us to assume that mentors in schools have all of the skills they need to perform their role effectively, although it is important to recognise that some may be more experienced and skilled than others. Ergo, an important question to ask is can people be trained to be better mentors, or is it just an innate ability that some of us have and some of us don't? If we look to Greek mythology [11] for some inspiration, we find that Telemachus' mentor - Mentor - wasn't quite up to snuff. Luckily for Telemachus, the goddess Athena was on hand to step into the breach to provide Odysseus' son with the sagacity and timely advice he needed to complete his quest but the question remains: how

could Mentor become a better mentor? We don't all have access to Greek goddesses and divine wisdom, so is it possible?

To design and construct an effective and meaningful development programme we need to explore the roles and responsibilities of the mentor, the dynamics of the mentee-mentor relationship and how we learn. Recognising that this learning will be a two-way process with both parties gaining something from the interaction and experience, will also be central to our development programme.

In David Clutterbuck's book 'Everyone Needs a Mentor' [3], he posits that 'mentoring is primarily focused on longer term goals and developing capability', which seems to partly fulfil the role that we would expect of the mentor of a trainee teacher. We would expect the mentor to support the trainee to develop their teaching capabilities as they complete their training, attaining the long term goal of acquiring qualified teacher status (QTS) at the end of the process. However, some problems and constraints exist that are peculiar to initial teacher education and are likely to affect the efficacy of the mentoring process.

Constraints

One such constraint is that mentoring takes place over a very short block of time, in teacher training it's a matter of weeks not years. This time constraint places considerable pressure on the mentor-mentee relationship. For example, if rapport is not established quickly it may be difficult for the mentee to 'open-up' to their mentor and reflect on their experiences honestly; to be in a position where they are comfortable enough to share vulnerabilities requires trust. This means that the effectiveness of any mentor-mentee relationship would be lessened. Quite simply, the mentee would not have the time - *in that placement, in that context* – to take the steps they need to take in order to develop their practice. Another significant barrier to the effectiveness of the mentoring process in ITE, is that some mentors do not chose to undertake the role, they are asked – or in some cases directed - to undertake it.

In the corporate world many companies are committed to providing employees with access to a mentoring scheme, appointing coordinators to match the 'right' mentor to the mentee [10]. Personnel and logistical issues, such as a limited pool of placements and mentors, presently make this untenable for any large ITE provider to pursue this approach but it may be

something we could look towards considering in the future.

Another significant issue that needs to be recognised is that in ITE the mentor also plays the role of 'judge', as we ask our mentors to assess their trainees' performance against the Teachers' Standards throughout their teaching practice. Performativity culture pervades our education system and we as a university ITE provider are not immune to it; measuring performance in this way is currently unavoidable due to the way in which we are measured as providers of teacher education by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted).

Inevitably, by asking our mentors to provide performance data we are directly affecting the mentor-mentee relationship. The effect that this will have on the effectiveness of the mentoring process is difficult to ascertain, primarily due to a lack of data and evidence in this area. The very act of surveillance itself, be it overt or covert, will also influence the dynamics and power differential within the mentor-mentee relationship.

Development as an educative process

I see development as an educative process and in this respect, mentor development is no different. The learner – in this case the mentor – is not a *tabula rasa* (blank slate), they bring with them past experiences, melded by socio-economic, societal and cultural factors, which in turn informs their epistemologies and experience of the world through their lens, guiding their learning.

How do we learn? If development is educative, any development programme worth its salt must surely have learning at its heart. Unsurprisingly, there is no clear answer to this question and there are many contrasting viewpoints, from cognitivist: in that a learner is actively involved in the learning process; to constructivist: the learner is more than just a processor of information, albeit an active one, learners construct *meaning* itself. Ertmer and Newby [5] propose that the role of an instructional designer advocating a constructivist approach to designing a development programme, is to provide instruction on 'how to construct meaning' and 'to align and design experiences for the learner so that authentic, relevant contexts can be experienced.' As such, I see clear advantages of adopting such an approach

for essentially a workplace development programme.

Learning is complex and nuanced, in my experience adult learning is no different. Andragogy*, or adult learning theory, was first proposed by Malcolm Knowles in the early 1970's. The core principles of andragogy [7] are:

- learners need to know ('why', 'what' and 'how');
- self-concept of the learner; prior experience of the learner;
- readiness to learn;
- orientation to learning and motivation to learn.

Knowles proposes that 'andragogy works best in practice when it is adapted to fit the uniqueness of the learners and the learning situation.'

Consideration of these principles and an awareness of the myriad of contextual and cultural differences experienced and encountered by mentors in school settings, is of fundamental importance when designing any adult development programme. As such, we have designed our programme to accommodate this and it affords mentors the opportunity to develop according to their needs and context, viewing learning as a contextualised process of the mentor

constructing knowledge and meaning for themselves rather than just acquiring it.

It is important to note there is much debate as to whether the process of learning for children and adults actually differs at all, with attempts to codify learning in this way considered by some to be futile. In my mind there is scant evidence available to support that there is a real and tangible difference, however, I believe that the core principles of andragogy are still worth exploring further.

In 1984 David Kolb, a prominent American educational theorist, proposed that experience is the source of adult learning and development. He proposed a model and provided a clear exposition of his theory in his highly influential and seminal work 'Experiential Learning: Experience as the source of learning and development' [8]. In Kolb's model, the cycle starts with a concrete experience i.e. the individual's learning starts with participation, it is an active process. By doing, reflecting and making sense of what has happened, an individual can consider how they can put what they have learnt into practice. In other words, they will be able to plan the actions they need to utilise and potentially benefit from their learning.

Again - as with Knowles' adult learning theory – it is important to recognise that Kolb's work is not without its critics.

People are not automatons, their behaviour does not always neatly fit into boxes; stages in the learning cycle can be skipped, reversed or repeated. There is a limited evidence base to support this theory and there are significant problems with the methodology used. Also, much new, exciting and relevant research has been and is being undertaken since 1984, particularly in the field of neuroscience. With this work linking directly to how learning happens, it would be remiss of any teacher educator to ignore it, we must take into account and acknowledge that experiential learning isn't the only way in which we learn.

What does this mean for us: can we, or should we use this? Is it so far from the truth to postulate human beings learn from experience? Personally, I think not and there is innumerable evidence that demonstrates that we do. Therefore, in our development programme the central tenet of experience will be used to support a process of dialogic reflection leading to learning and development. Lofthouse (2018) suggests that by offering mentors a space and structure in which to do this allows us to re-imagine mentoring 'as a dynamic hub within a practice development-led model for individual professional learning and institutional growth' and that 'acting on this conceptualisation would allow mentors,

trainees and other supporting teacher educators to contribute to the transformation of professional learning practices and educational contexts.' [9]

Skills

I would propose that the *process* of developing one's skills as a mentor is no different to that of a trainee developing their skills as a teacher. Both parties are learning and developing through direct experience, so being able to provide mentors with a space - or opportunity - where they can unpack their learning is of fundamental importance.

What skills do we need our mentors to have - is the DfE's National Mentor Standards for ITT (2016) comprehensive enough or even specific enough to suit our needs? The European Mentoring and Coaching Council has produced a useful competency framework [6] which suggests that mentors need to demonstrate competence in eight categories in order to be effective. In terms of ITE and our development programme, the categories most pertinent to us are: understanding self, commitment to self-development, building the relationship, enabling insight and learning and evaluation. We will draw on these as a source of reference as we build and develop our programme over time.

What next?

We are committing a significant amount of resource, in terms of time and expertise, to offer a development programme to improve the quality of mentoring across our ITE partnership, so it would be foolish for us not to finish with possibly the most important question of all - is the mentor the biggest influence on the student teacher's professional development? Billett (2013) suggests that engaging with a more expert partner – a mentor – is only one part of their learning process and that 'the other is the degree by which workers are interested in, motivated by and able to intentionally learn through these engagements.' [2] This could also be surmised by the well-known adage 'You can guide a horse to water but you can't make it drink' (Anon).

As I sit here writing this piece, I am unable to speculate as to how effective or beneficial this development programme will be for our mentors and their mentees, of course I have high hopes and expectations. I will reflect on and evaluate its effectiveness throughout the year and come back to this piece of writing to share my reflections with you at the end of process.

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Mentoring as part of career long professional development and learning

A Research Working Paper by Rachel Lofthouse

Looking beyond the deficit

Sometimes it feels like we approach professional practice in education with a deficit model. What else should we be doing? What could be improved through marginal gains? What stretching targets can we agree? Who needs to be held to account? What works, and by implication, what doesn't work? Mentoring in Initial Teacher Education is a professional practice that is often framed as something to be improved. My research has contributed to this, and my recently published conceptual paper in the International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education (Lofthouse, 2018) does indicate some of the aspects of mentoring that are problematic and have the potential to be developed. This working paper is deliberately not taking a deficit approach. It has two distinct parts: firstly, it is a reflection on a small scale survey of student teachers' positive experiences of being mentored, and secondly it introduces a conceptualisation of how the potential of mentoring might be maximised.

Benefits of being mentored: a simple survey

So, I want to start this working paper from a positive place, from the perspective of student teachers reflecting on what they felt was the greatest benefit of working with their school-based mentor during their school placements. The sample size is small, with just 33 students who were part of the cohorts on Leeds Beckett University ITTE courses in 2017-18 completing the survey. Of these, 48% were studying on the Primary or Early Years PGCE, 46% on the Secondary PGCE and just 6% on the BA with QTS. Of the PGCE students 1/3 were registered on a School Direct route, and 2/3 were following the core university provision.

This is a small evidence base, and beyond providing information regarding their training route, the students were asked to only provide a response to the question of the greatest benefit of working with their mentor. Most of the responses were short, single sentences highlighting one benefit (as might be expected when asked what was *the* greatest benefit), with a few responses being more extended.

Sometimes these more extended answers meant that the students also reflected on more negative aspects of their mentoring experiences, but these were not solicited on this occasion. Comparisons will not be drawn between evidence emerging from different routes as they are not possible given the small sample size.

The students' responses to the open comment question revealed three dominant themes as indicated in the table below.

Theme as indicated by words used by students in their comments	% of respondents using these words
The mentor offered *support*, or was *supportive (including* reassurance)	36
Learning from the *mentor's experience* of teaching	36
The mentor helped set *targets* and / or gave *feedback*	33
The mentor offered *advice* or *guidance* or suggested *good practice*	21

These themes are closely related to each other and inevitably overlap; they also obscure some possible nuances in the mentoring approaches adopted. For example, some mentors will have offered feedback in the form of direct advice about what to do differently, based on their own experience. Other mentors might have highlighted the good practice already present in their student teacher's own teaching as a key form of feedback, and provided questions and provocations for students to reflect on. Both approaches could be done in a supportive manner, with an understanding of how the student might be feeling or might most need at different stages in their placement. Some student quotes illustrate this;

It was very beneficial having someone to encourage targets and keep progress more focused. My mentors were both kind and supportive emotionally if needed, and offered advice, ideas, teaching tips and guidance through the teacher's standards. (Lisa, Primary PGCE)

Being able to draw on his experiences and he shared good practise. He wanted me to keep improving, so was a positive role model. (Charlotte, BA Hons Primary Education with QTS)

My mentor was fantastic, and could give me her current knowledge within the school. You could reflect on practice together to improve teaching for the next lesson. (Hannah, Secondary PGCE)

Experience, working towards targets and building on strengths. Constant pointers to work on. (Alex, Secondary PGCE)

Interestingly one student wrote the following about her mentor:

She was understanding and supportive when I was struggling, even though she was unable to give me useful professional guidance to help me improve. (Rachael, PGCE Primary)

Other students indicated specific areas of practice which they were supported to develop. Four students referred to advice on teaching styles, two referred to advice on planning, another two to behaviour management, and two to school policies and expectations. Single students also picked out differentiation, subject knowledge, work-life balance and job interviews. If nothing else this limited data does illustrate the breadth of the 'teaching practice curriculum' that mentors are expected to cover.

She was part of the leadership team so helped as much as possible to allow me to correspond to the school policies and expectations. (Sophie, Primary PGCE)

I gained from seeing another teaching style and approach to behaviour, you realise that everyone has different teaching style/approach, this helped my confidence. Also got an incredible amount of support, not just with lesson planning and observations, but with preparation for job interviews and writing

personal statement. (Helen, Secondary PGCE).

Thinking about mentoring as workplace learning

It is helpful at this point to think about mentoring as a means to enable workplace learning, and to draw on two key constructs of workplace learning offered by Stephen Billett (2011).

Billett draws our attention to the three key goals of workplace learning. In the case of student teachers this would suggest that we need to firstly ensure that teaching is the student teacher's desired goal, and assuming that it is to then help them to identify prospective specific career interests. Billett goes on to propose that workplace learning should offer the support that student teachers need to help them to gain key occupational capacities, in other words learning the skills needed to do the job as they enter the profession. He concludes that workplace learning should allow the new entrant into the profession to develop occupational competencies that they will need for future professional learning, ensuring that they have the skills needed to keep developing.

Billett also refers to key dimensions of practice-based workplace learning, of pedagogies, curriculum and epistemologies) which can again be translated into mentoring practices. The guidance, feedback, and target setting can be framed as aspects of mentoring *practice pedagogies* which offer appropriate teaching and learning techniques in support of workplace learning at career entry stage. Our student teachers' survey results suggest that they find these aspects of mentoring productive and supportive. Mentoring can be conceptualised as part of a *practice curriculum* in ITE, intersecting with more formal training, learning by direct experience of teaching (and associated tasks), personal reflection, study and assignment writing. Mentoring is one of the key learning opportunities offered to student teachers in their new workplaces, and itself supports the coverage of the relevant teacher training curriculum content (as indicated above by the reference to what the student teachers learned about from their mentors).

The good news is that skilled mentors, working within schools and for ITE providers where there is well planned and resourced mentoring can ably contribute to good workplace learning through appropriate mentoring practice

pedagogies and curriculum. The less easily controlled dimension of practice-based learning are the personal epistemologies that both mentors and student teachers enter into the mentoring with. In simple terms these are the beliefs and values that the participants bring to learning in the workplace and to their roles. The mentoring practices reported favourably on by the student teachers in the survey highlighted the element of support and advice. This may seem unquestionable, but not all student teachers experience this during their placements, with some feeling judged, monitored and left to fend for themselves. This has been identified in earlier research (including my own, Lofthouse and Thomas, 2014) as making mentoring a potentially vulnerable workplace learning practice. While this working paper is focused on the good news it is worth highlighting that some students clarified what they recognised as beneficial because their mentoring experiences had been inconsistent. Two survey responses illustrate this, and perhaps point to both the limiting and the enabling epistemological values and beliefs held by different mentors;

Just having a great wealth of experience always there and always being so helpful. Had a great time compared to my first placement which was so unsupportive and didn't get any help! (Elliot, Secondary PGCE)

Helpful meetings and conversations about lessons with ways to improve and also notes on the positive things that I was doing. Helping me to settle into school life with ease. (Lauren, Secondary PGCE)

Despite this being a small survey, what is evident from the student teachers' reflections is that mentors really can make a difference to student teachers meeting the demands and challenges created by their placement experiences. This occurs in very practical terms but also in more emotional ones. Student teachers recognise the role that mentors play in getting them through the procedures associated with the course (such as lesson observations, target setting and demonstrating evidence of meeting the required standards). They also are grateful and gain confidence when they are given genuine and timely support and guidance by their mentors.

Thinking about mentoring as formative professional learning

In the second part of this paper I want to draw on a conceptual model of professional learning for practice development which can be applied to mentoring (Lofthouse, 2018). This conceptual model emerged during my own

PhD research and was developed from my perspective as an experienced teacher educator based in the English university ITE sector and draws on both my practical experience in that role and the body of my associated published research. The model itself is visually complex, and rather than reproduce that here I will highlight some of its key features. It is based on two key aspects of professional learning; attributes which exist in both individuals and institutions which have the capacity to promote and support learning, and the learning behaviours and cultures that can result.

During the ITE programme encouraging the student teacher to explore new ideas for practice can seem challenging, when often what everyone seems to be seeking is the passing on of the 'what works' tips and routines. However professional learning and the development of practices can be enhanced if mentors create opportunity for *creativity*. This is perhaps best explained as mentors recognising the importance that to support their learning student teachers need to be given permission to problem-solve; opportunities to innovate; and access to alternative practices and perspectives. Through this the student teachers can become open to a range of other ideas; gaining the capacity to develop original thinking and

the confidence to go beyond routine practices. This is essential if student teachers are to thrive in a range of (often as yet unknown) future professional contexts, and also opens up the two-way street of mentoring, from which mentors are also benefitting from the joint exploration of new approaches to teaching.

Secondly, mentors should offer *solidarity*. This starts with the support that so many student teachers acknowledge and appreciate, but goes further. Developing a sense of solidarity allows student teachers and their mentors to understand others' needs, to take responsibility for what matters and to be part of a democracy of accountability; and to do so by engaging with their peers, their students and the wider community. To develop solidarity which allows them to see beyond their personal experiences and immediate concerns student teachers and mentors need opportunities for professional dialogue, chances to engage in collaboration and joint enterprises with others, and the spaces to create shared values.

There is also a need for mentors to offer *authenticity*. What I mean by this is that they can help new teachers to seek to understand the socio-cultural characteristics of the broad educational and social landscapes within which they work and the details of the specific contexts of their emerging practice. This means recognising how these characteristics create tensions in, and priorities of, the educational setting in which teachers work. This is only possible if student teachers are motivated to learn and take account of the ethical dimensions and dilemmas of their practice. Both mentors and student teachers need to bring their own values into their practice and also to let their learning result in the evolution of their values over time.

But there are tensions in creating and sustaining the rich practices of mentoring we might aim for. I want to consider tensions as educative opportunities which are often missed, or activities started but not sustained or which are too frequently poorly planned for. My research suggests that when teachers learn and develop their practices there is the potential for their own learning behaviours to change (they are constantly in formation), and for the organisations and the wider system that they work in to change too; but that this is not guaranteed, and indeed sometimes it is quite actively supressed. Mentoring could contribute to this virtuous circle.

So, let me introduce three more critical concepts; of the necessity that student teachers and mentors are able to articulate their practice and learning, to engage in and with critique and also to expand on their learning. These are the opportunities that are too often missed because the educational landscape that student teachers and mentors inhabit can be relatively restrictive, too often performative and sometimes even punitive (not to mention fractured, unforgivably busy and underfunded).

So first let's focus on the importance of mentors and student teachers *articulating* their learning. Ask yourself what opportunities you as a mentor have to explain your practices and your thinking to others and to make your learning public. Now ask these questions about the student teachers. How often do we ensure that student teachers and mentors have genuine opportunities to contribute to an accessible professional knowledge base? What work do we do that ensures that we develop a shared language between education practitioners, for examples between the early years, schools, college and university sectors, and between the professions and communities with whom we share responsibilities for learning and wellbeing? Could your mentoring facilitate this?

Secondly I want to be realistic about the importance of *critique*. Engaging critically is not the same as being the bearer or recipient of criticism. It means that student teachers and mentors put effort into analysing practice evidence, are encouraged to reflect critically on practice, research and theory, and become open to engaging in processes of critique. Ask yourself how often we create a safe space for this? Is the culture that exists in schools one in which professionals are invited not just to be evidence-informed, but also to critique the forms of evidence they are offered or asked to collect. How often to student teachers get to work slowly and intelligently, where they are allowed to tune, attune and refine their own practices, rather than be nudged or forced to adopt someone else's at someone else's speed? How often do student teachers and their mentors get to engage with and create networks of critical friends, who provoke them to think, to experiment and to aspire? How often does your mentoring create safe, two-way dialogue, which facilitates critique (not judgement or criticism)?

Unless we create these opportunities the final unresolved tension will be that we have fostered restrictive rather than expansive learning environments. If teachers' learning throughout their careers

does matter (including our new teachers), it is because we have allowed that learning to **expand** educational practice, opportunities and outcomes. To enable this means that we have allowed student teachers to develop dialogic thinking and self-regulation; to develop personal theories and models to inform their practice and to make better use of sound evidence to contribute to organisational development (such as the writing of curriculum or the consideration of new assessment policies). Ask yourself whether as a mentor you have given new teachers the tools to do this and whether we allow them to develop educative values which help them to develop values-based policies, cultures and practices.

Conclusion

We know that good mentoring is essential when student teachers spend so much of their time in schools, and we know that it can enhance their workplace learning. Guaranteeing the quality and integrity of mentoring across diverse placements, for students with a wide range of starting points and personal values and beliefs about teaching and learning, is not without its challenges. There are time and resource implications which can hit mentors in schools who are already feeling stretched by their teaching workload hard. In these circumstances

there are at least three options for mentoring student teachers.

One option is to make the mentoring streamlined, focused and efficient. The potential problem with this is that it becomes procedural and relatively restrictive in terms of the student teachers learning environment.

Another option is to see the student teachers as a resource, some-one to get up to speed as quickly as possible so that they can ease some of the burden on other teachers. This seems sensible, and is often welcomes initially by student teachers, who want to take the reins, and feel that they will learn best 'on the job'.

Finally, there is an option of making the mentoring itself both formative and capacity building, a practice which actually helps all involved to learn from each other, to engage with evidence and to develop the sort of adaptive expertise that might make thriving rather than surviving a reality. This is not just a question of meeting the immediate needs of each new cohort of student teachers, this is also a question of sustaining the teaching profession.

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I will finish with a final quote from a student teacher, who wrote just two words when considering the greatest benefit of working with her school-based mentor. I am left wondering what the mentoring story behind her response was;

Developed resilience (Rebecca, Primary PGCE).

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Mentoring: Managed by Myth

A Research and Practice Insight Working Paper by J. K. Alexander

Abstract

Throughout the school session 2017-18, I mentored a newly qualified teacher (NQT) to successful completion of their probationary period of one year. Feeling dissatisfied by the experience, I explored Foucault's concept of governmentality to try and work out why. What I now recognise is that my actions as a mentor were a result of being socialised into norms embedded in myth. As a practising teacher with potentially many more mentees in the future, I wanted to understand my own actions and work out how to avoid repeating the same mistakes. I think I have discovered how to do this. By exploring the concept of mentoring, and linking this to an analysis of power, I can now begin my journey to being a better mentor.

Mentoring

Much academic literature on mentoring begins with the traditional account of Mentor and Telemachus found in Homer's 'The Odyssey' (Colley, 2000). In Greek mythology, when Odysseus left home to fight in a Greek campaign abroad, Telemachus, his son, was entrusted to the care of his father's friend, Mentor (Grassinger et al., 2010). Mentor acted as an experienced and trusted guide who provided support, advice and protection to Telemachus. Colley (2000) argues that in academic literature that cites The Odyssey as a source, one of two dominant narratives usually emerge: the figure of Mentor as a kindly and nurturing elder, and the function of Mentor as inspirer who provides counsel.

This model of mentoring is found in modern day conceptions of master and apprentice or teacher and pupil (Grassinger et al., 2010) but Colley (2000) cautions that it may not accurately match the mentoring arising from the relationship between Mentor and Telemachus. This view is supported by Roberts (1998) who notes that instead of a nurturing role model, Mentor was simply a friend of Odysseus.

Roberts writes, '…quite simply, Homer's Mentor did not mentor. It was Fenelon, who in 1699 wrote Les Adventures de Telemaque…and bestowed (Mentor) with the qualities and attributes that are analogous with the current usage of the term' (p.19). Nevertheless, a social construction or myth regarding the character and role of mentor and mentee has grown around the relationship between Homer's Mentor and Telemachus. The following multi-attribute definition of mentoring is an example of such construction:

a nurturing process in which a more skilled or more experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and/or personal development. Mentoring functions are carried out within the context of an on-going, caring relationship between the mentor and protégé.

(Anderson 1987, in Kerry and Mayes, 1995:29)

This definition captures the complexity of skills, characteristics and traits which dominate current conceptions of mentoring. When Foucault (1991) discusses the power of the norm, it is in such a definition that his concept of governmentality can be seen. When a concept becomes normalized it conditions how it is perceived and so becomes a tool that governs practices (Foucault, 1984 in Walkerdine, 1992).

Governmentality

Foucault's notion of governmentality offers a different perspective from traditional notions that see power as residing in a central institution or body, for example a monarchy holds power over its subjects. Instead, Foucault believes that power, and especially disciplinary power which operates to 'make individuals…to provide a hold on their conduct' (Foucault, 1991:170/172), is diffuse, 'relational and discursive. It circulates everywhere through networks of relationships' (Nicoll and Fejes, 2008:6). If power is found in the complex relationships that construct and control what people think and do, then understanding how power operates can become a tool which illuminates beliefs, behaviours and practices. In this way, Foucault's

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ideas about power, particularly disciplinary power, illuminates my experience of mentoring.

Two Personal Reflections

Firstly, it is through reading about governmentality that I acknowledge the tremendous emotional labour I experienced in striving to live up to the mythic ideal of the perfect mentor. Added to Anderson's multi-attribute definition of mentoring is the findings of Roberts (1998:19) who provides an extensive list of the characterisation and roles of a mentor. To paraphrase; a mentor teaches, guides, is a role model, counsels, empowers, nurtures, provides friendship, encourages, is able to communicate, is flexible, has a sense of humour, is an authority in the field and interested in the mentee's growth and potential. Roberts concludes that this list is not exhaustive and he asks, 'what person then is best suited to such a daunting role?' (p.20). The normalisation of these attributes represents what Foucault would regard as an invisible power (Walkerdine, 1992) which governs beliefs and behaviours. The myth of Mentor influenced how I conducted myself as a mentor: I suppressed moments of annoyance because the myth presents an ideal of an ever-kindly and patient tutor and I hid

exhaustion because the myth presents an ideal of being always available and interested. I have felt guilt at 'not feeling like a very good mentor' even though I know the myth is a constructed ideal and not reality. When applied to mentoring, Foucault's analysis of power would identify my role of mentor as an object who becomes a subject. An object becomes a subject of power when it is socialised in particular ways and those ways become embedded in norms and structures. The subject is produced within the discourse and begins to act in expected ways. This is what Foucault describes as governmentality. For Foucault, an 'encounter between the technologies of domination and those of the self I call 'governmentality'' (Foucault, 1996 in Fendler, 2003:21). If I now ask myself why I accepted an embellished ancient Greek interpretation of the role of a mentor in the first place, a Foucauldian analysis points to the workings of discourse.

A discourse can be described as a way of making sense of the world. For Foucault, discourse is part of power and how power operates because it 'influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others' (Lin, 1998: n.p.). Rose (1992:161) describes it as 'practices through which we act upon ourselves and one another in order to make us particular kinds of being' meaning 'increasingly

specific regulation and internalized disposition' (Ranson, 2003:470) affect not just how teachers should perform but changes the way teachers act and think about themselves. In short, imposed and internalised beliefs and behaviours entwine to produce a particular desired outcome. In my mentoring experience the technologies of domination included the bureaucratic practices of professional standards and a weekly minuted mentoring meeting, in other words, the 'disciplinary writing' of Foucault (1991:190). The domination of the self is shown in that I wholly perceived these practices as normal and accepted the beliefs, behaviours and practices of mentoring without question.

My second reflection relates to evaluating assumptions. Van Ginkel et al. (2016:104) explain that mentoring 'styles or approaches refer to the typical forms of behaviour, acting or typical strategies that mentors employ. Conceptions, on the other hand, refer to the mental models and beliefs about mentoring and learning that mentors draw upon in thinking about practice'.

In this separation of thinking and behaviours, a tension in my experience of mentoring a NQT occurred because we held different conceptions of mentoring. Research on novice teacher mentoring identifies two main distinct mentoring conceptions: an instrumental conception and a developmental conception (Van Ginkel et al., 2016). These authors conclude that mentors who draw on an instrumental mentoring conception 'orient themselves to concerns for effective teaching practice' while mentors holding a developmental mentoring conception are concerned about 'mentee learning and professional development' (p.105). In my experience of mentoring, my mentee was drawing on instrumental outcomes while I was concerned about development outcomes. This is not surprising. A NQT usually wants to learn how to teach quite quickly, wants to establish herself as a 'proper' teacher and wants to improve her performance. A twenty year career gap between myself and the NQT meant my priorities were different. My questions to the NQT were oriented to raising her awareness of 'interrelations between teaching and learning' while she wanted 'ready-made tools and routines for effective and efficient teaching' (Van Ginkel et al., 2016:105). This reflection highlights an assumption that both mentor and mentee wanted the same goals and would eventually arrive at the same place. Built into the myth of mentoring is that the result for both parties is satisfactory. In 'The Odyssey', Mentor achieves his goal of guiding Telemachus to achieve his goal

of his father's return from battle. Their thinking was aligned. However, when 'mental models and beliefs about mentoring' are unaligned (Van Ginkel et al., 2016:104), the myth arguably falls short.

At the beginning of this paper I claimed that I mentored a NQT to successful completion of their probationary period. In one sense this is true. Standards were met, forms were filled in and the NQT received an offer of a job. So why do I feel dissatisfied? The answer lies in the assumption of mutual satisfaction found in the myth of Mentor and in the troubling recognition that I have perpetuated the normalisation of behaviours that control and impact on the lives of others. I can claim to have trained a NQT into the basics of teaching but to what extent have I developed her capacity for agency, action or change? In a recent article, the scholar Henry Giroux (2018, n.p.) adopts a Foucauldian stance when he argues that 'domination is at its most powerful when its mechanisms of control and subjugation hide in the discourse of common sense and its elements of power are made to appear invisible'. As I reflect on the mentoring experience I now understand that an instrumental rationality dominated what I did and how I worked. External and internal subjectivities of power shaped my thinking, beliefs and actions and moulded

me and the NQT into a recognizable norm, and not into inspiring a challenge of dominant myths. A social construction of mentoring and market assumptions of efficiency and economy kept me accountable to neoliberal ideals. My NQT became in Foucault's words, 'a case…(an) individual…described, judged, measured, compared with others who has to be trained, classified, normalized…' (Foucault, 1991:191).

Policies, myths and other external and internal influences contribute to a normalization of concepts which form a disciplinary technology shaping my beliefs and practices. However, in reading about governmentality it becomes clear that these influences can be interrupted because power does not have to be negative. Resistance is intrinsic to governmentality when Foucault explicitly states, 'we must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it' censors'….In fact, power produces; it produces reality' (Foucault, 1991:194). Foucault's ideas of power and discourse illuminate that while there are 'practices of subjection', there are also 'practices of liberation' (Patrick, 2013:6). Mentoring need not be instrumental but could be a form of resistance if it opens up new spaces in which agency and action and

change can appear. A careful reading of Foucault's governmentality offers the possibility that through a critique of power and discourse alternative ideas can emerge thus creating new possibilities for beliefs, behaviours and practices.

Reflecting on this experience has demonstrated that theories such as Foucault's governmentality can be used to interrogate and disturb previously unexamined notions. The value of such an activity is that in illuminating current being, doing and thinking, a process of altering that being, doing and thinking can begin.

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Improving Mentoring Practices through Collaborative Conversations

A Thinkpiece Working Paper by Rachel Lofthouse

Providing a mentor for beginning teachers means giving them support and ensuring that they build up their professional capacity, knowledge and skills. A mentor is usually a colleague with relevant, school-specific experience. Mentoring also bridges the transition between initial teacher education and full employment. In some situations, mentors make judgements or provide evidence that the new teacher has demonstrated required professional competencies.

While national and cultural expectations of mentoring vary, engaging in mentoring conversations is common. However, in most educational contexts there is limited time for teachers' professional development. It is therefore critical that where time is assigned for mentoring the professional dialogue is engaging and productive.

'Targets' (usually about teaching and learning) are a common part of mentoring or coaching conversations: deliberating over what targets should be prioritised, making targets realistic and measurable, evaluating progress towards them and providing feedback prior to setting new

ones can become an all-consuming activity. Add in workload pressures, anxieties about being judged or having to make judgements, and the mentoring conversations can become restrictive. They can go one of two ways: some people experience them as having high stakes, others feel they become relatively superficial.

How can we ensure that mentoring enables genuine learning processes?

Mentoring conversations can be a **transformative** space where important aspects of professional practice are debated and emerging professional identities, both as a new teacher and a mentor, can be constructed. Creating a genuinely valuable mentoring experience is possible, and much of it comes through conversation.

Trust seems critical, but cannot be assumed. Opportunities to explore problems without fear of punitive judgement need to be created. Respect for the value of the combined expertise offered by the unique mentoring

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partnership needs to be felt. Even the newest teachers have something to offer their mentor, so mentoring can be a two-way dialogue.

Lessons from research can help teachers conduct better mentoring conversations. Following a UK research project on teacher coaching, we began to understand professional dialogue through what we called coaching dimensions.

First, there is a need to '**stimulate**'. Good mentors know how to initiate thoughtful reflections and stimulate decisions with their mentee. But they also know when hold back and let the beginning teacher take the initiative. They are aware of how to collect and use available learning tools. Some use videos of lessons (their own and their mentees'); some make lesson observation notes focused on agreed aspects of the lesson; sometimes the beginning teacher creates a professional learning journal from which points for discussion are identified.

Secondly, mentors need to '**scaffold**' the discussion. They can, for example, use critical moments in teaching and learning – or the lesson as a whole – to help the beginning teacher discuss broader themes about teaching and learning, or explore the 'big ideas' about relationships between school, individuals and society.

Finally, it is important to '**sustain**' the learning conversation. Good mentors become aware of their tone of voice, keeping it neutral and curious to encourage open discussions. They create opportunities for their mentee to think back, think ahead and think laterally. The conversation is also sustained through finding meaning and value in it. The mentor and the beginning teacher need to work together to create a dynamic conversation in which there are opportunities to share problems, to pose and respond to questions, to extend thinking, to build solutions.

Mentoring can form part of the social glue between colleagues. It should support the emergence of a network of strong professional relationships which empower the new teacher to play an active role and to meet the needs of the school community. Conversations have a significant role in realising this potential.

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The Benefits of Mosaic Mentoring for Early Career Teachers

A Research Working Paper by Kim Gilligan

The impetus for this piece emerged from an ongoing concern with the quality of mentoring that some students and newly qualified teachers engage with when in schools. I had been aware for a long while that individuals did not necessarily get parity of experience and that sometimes things went terribly wrong, and a student or newly qualified teacher would even be at risk of leaving the profession prematurely. This discussion draws on my recent findings when interviewing a number of newly qualified teachers and looks at what factors can help or hinder the mentoring experience. It considers the power relationships that may emerge and how these may be avoided with alternative forms of mentoring.

Both mentoring and coaching processes occur in schools and are complex and multifaceted. The quality of the interactions that occur can make a significant difference to whether or not someone succeeds in the early stages of teaching and perhaps more significantly whether they go on to stay in the profession (Eby et al 2013). Mentors are involved in a range of interactions with their mentees and may need to navigate the full range of emotions that emerge during mentoring encounters both from themselves and their mentees. One of the most significant issues that may surface during mentoring is the impact of the disparity in power and how this may be played out in the everyday contexts and between the individuals.

In general mentoring is understood as a more experienced mentor guiding a less experienced mentee and the relationship tends to fall in to two types; either relational (take a psychosocial form) or be very instrumental (focused on career development) (Johnson et al 2007). In my experience there are a number of contributing factors that influence which type of mentoring occurs and a significant one is time. It is common for the most experienced or senior members of staff to be asked to mentor but they are often the very staff who currently carry the most responsibility and even when very willing, will struggle to invest the time needed to support someone fully. It is also highly likely that those individuals commonly have a significant role in the NQT evaluation role which serve to monitor staff' performances. This may bleed into the mentoring process. These dual roles may well cause tensions to emerge when the developmental side of mentoring suddenly switches to a critically evaluative

process, attempting to measure performance. This can impact on the trust that has built up between the mentor and mentee prior to performance measurement. Ball (2004) notes the insidious nature of the performativity agendas in schools and warns of the divisive nature of such agendas suggesting that many teachers are 'terrorised' by performativity agendas at all kinds of levels. Students or early career teachers can be particularly vulnerable to these regimes of accountability or what Foucault (1977) may describe as surveillance, a constant feeling that you are being watched and evaluated against standards.

In the case of student or early career teachers their performativity will be monitored closely, commonly through feedback after regular observations. The observation process has the capacity to be part of a critical reflection process and if done correctly and with considerable thought can be incredibly beneficial in enabling the mentee to accurately and sensitively be lead through a reflection process that will culminate in improvements in their practice and dispositions. The crucial factor in whether the mentoring is successful is the relationships that develop and how these work. In idealised mentoring relationships (Alexander 2018) the relationship will be mutually beneficial and will flourish with each member of the dyad recognising the strengths of the other.

Unfortunately, my experience of observing mentoring processes over fifteen years has resulted in me questioning an arrangement where there is pressure on one individual person to meet the entire needs of another in what can be highly pressured environments. In most other relationships between two people more realistic expectations would be negotiated and there would be an acceptance that each member may seek different aspects of support from significant others outside of the relationship (Kram and Isabella 1985).

During a recent research study I interviewed a number of recently qualified teachers about their mentoring experiences and found that most voiced a preference for what is usefully described as a 'mosaic of mentoring'. Kram (1985) describes this as a relationship constellation rather than a one to one mentoring arrangement. The participants described the benefits of what amounted to mentoring networks within a setting rather than a singular relationship with a more senior other. This was because with a dyadic relationship there is always the possibility of a breakdown in the relationship which may cause issues that

can have long term impact. It is the case according to Eby et al (2013) that mentees often relate to people they see as similar to themselves, but if the mentor is not similar then that singular relationship may have limited impact. On the otherhand a constellation of relationships may ensure that a mentee receives different aspects of support from a variety of individuals and relationships are therefore less pressured in terms of delivering every aspect that a mentee needs.

The constellation arrangement may, for example result in a mentee gaining organisational literacy (Blasé 1984) (knowledge of the norms of the setting), from one person and support with behaviour management from another, and then advice about pedagogical approaches from someone else again. We know that knowledge of the mores and norms of an organisation are important, but if a mentee receives information about the organisation from a singular senior manager then they may well get a specific ideological viewpoint based on the manager's position in the organisation rather than a more nuanced version from others describing it (Jokikokkoa et al 2017).

It is clear from the discourses of the participants that when mentoring networks were in place the hierarchical nature of mentoring was reduced and a pattern of behaviours more indicative of a community of practice (Lave and Wenger) ensued. In addition, the impact of the perceived power of the mentor over the individual mentee diminished. In a community of practice there tends to be an emphasis on shared knowledge with value given to each individual in the community rather than just to those with more experience in a specific area. In the case of my participants, when this happened it was noted as being very motivational and was significant in them feeling that they had something to offer a setting rather than constantly taking from others. One of my participants felt that when working with an individual mentor their strengths in particular areas, like technology, were not always recognised but got lost in other discourses of deficiency which are common in relation to new teachers. In contrast when they had wider relationships that constituted mentoring networks they had a broader perception of their abilities reinforced by the different contributions made by them in a number of mentoring encounters.

Simultaneous interactions with a number of mentors allows a more balanced organisational socialisation to occur and shifts the relationship nexus from passive adjustments on the part of the mentee to a more active and enabling set of

interactions, which can occur across different contexts. The impact of power is also less likely to be felt in quite the same way, as the mentee may be guided by a range of people each bringing their own relational and vocational skills to the table.

Although the research study is in its infancy, it has revealed important messages about the need to not idealise individual mentoring, as it puts too much pressure on both parties. Instead we should consider the value of alternative approaches that bring together a range of participants and contrasting attitudes into a cohesive support network. One important element of this is the fact that the support network does not rely on an outside body like a Headteacher, choosing the relationship but instead is driven by the needs of the mentee. The constellation may also lead to a less bounded process emerging where there is a wider focus than professional development (Cotton et al 2011) and the mentee accesses personal development through informal conversations constituting what may involve psychosocial elements.

These wider relationships enable subtle opportunities for beginning teachers to try out their professional and personal identities in safer ways away from the harsh gaze of performativity agendas. The impact of the mosaic of interactions across time appears to build resilience in different ways without negating the sometimes outstanding work that individual mentors do. The constellation formed in a mosaic perhaps most importantly involves the mentee in a process of self- determination where they have autonomy and a higher level of self- efficacy. What then emerges is a co-construction of knowledge that leads to motivation and a drive to succeed resulting in high calibre professionals being formed.

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Opening up a discussion: Do coaches and mentors make successful educational leaders?

A Thinkpiece by Rachel Lofthouse

In October 2015, I was fortunate to be able to lead a discussion session at the first ever WomenEd *un*conference. WomenEd[1] is a grassroots movement which connects existing and aspiring leaders in education. The group exists to address the fact that even though women dominate the workforce across all sectors of education there still remain gender inequalities, particularly at senior leadership level. My session was entitled 'Do coaches and mentors make successful educational leaders?' The session was a learning conversation. I invited the participants to discuss the fact that many women take roles as mentors or coaches in schools and colleges, playing a key role in facilitating professional development and building learning cultures, but to consider the degree to which acting as a coach or mentor might prepare us for, or dissuade us from, leadership. While this is an issue of relevance to women in education, it is not exclusively so. As Teaching Schools and School Direct extend the reach and scale of their combined roles in the 'self-

improving school-led system' it seems logical that coaching and mentoring activities will expand. When working well both coaching and mentoring draw on, and build up, the cultural competency and linguistic skills of both parties. In terms of impact it is frequently reported that coaches and mentors find the role has a positive impact on their own teaching, but what about its impact on their potential and practice as leaders?

I have a history of research, teaching and school-based CPD in coaching and mentoring, as is evident by other blog posts on this site and elsewhere[2]. While they serve different purposes coaching and mentoring might both provide levers and pathways into good leadership. However, in relation to the links between coaching and mentoring of teachers (for the development of teaching practices) and educational leadership I have some concerns.

The objectives and practices of coaching and mentoring often get distorted by the

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[1] www.womened.org

[2] https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/beyond-mentoring-peer-coaching-by-and-for-teachers-can-it-live-up-to-its-promise

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performative culture in schools and can fail to have the positive impact that is their potential. In previous work we have explored this through CHAT (Cultural-Historical Activity Theory)[3]. As we wrote in the abstract of the paper, coaching in educational settings is an alluring concept, as it carries associations with life coaching and well-being, sports coaching and achievement and improving educational attainment. Although there are examples of successful deployment in schools, there is also evidence that coaching often struggles to meet expectations. We used socio-cultural theory to explore why coaching does NOT transplant readily to schools, particularly in England, where the object of coaching activity may be in contradiction to the object of dominant activity in schools – meeting examination targets.

Coaches and mentors have the opportunity to develop great communication skills. However, this opportunity is not always realised. Too often these activities are squeezed into very busy working weeks, given inadequate time, or are hijacked (deliberately or inadvertently) by a narrowly-defined target-based sense of professional development. Developing, practicing and sustaining excellent coaching or mentoring requires a certain language, and a willingness to look beyond the particulars of specific lessons. It requires a more open understanding of a shared process of informed scrutiny than is typically possible in a hurried conversation or one which has overtones of performance management. The communication skills being rehearsed in coaching or mentoring can become rather diminished. If they are not, and coaching or mentoring becomes more sophisticated then the participants develop a new language for talking about teaching and learning, linking together critical incidents and whole lesson characteristics (for example), and exploring each-others' understanding using a broad interactional repertoire which allows for challenge, exploration of ideas and co-construction. Good coaches and mentors support successful formation of teacher identities that go beyond the requirements to demonstrate a checklist of competencies.

Previous research illustrates these levels of development of both coaching[4] and

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[3] Rachel Lofthouse, David Leat, (2013) "An activity theory perspective on peer coaching", International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education, Vol. 2 Iss: 1, pp.8-20

http://eprint.ncl.ac.uk/pub_details2.aspx?pub_id=190955
[4] Rachel Lofthouse, David Leat, & Carl Towler, (2010) *Improving Teacher Coaching in Schools; A Practical Guide,* CfBT Education

mentoring[5]. But, even when it works at this level there may still be a problem. Educational leadership has become a very managerial process – one through which a priority is holding colleagues to account. The language of exploration and development which might be developed through coaching and mentoring does not always translate easily to accountability regimes.

While coaches and mentors may gain real insight into the issues affecting colleagues and learners in their school (and sometimes beyond) this 'intelligence' may not then be translated in to leadership. This gap may be caused by the difficulties in resolving activities at different scales. Coaching and mentoring are typically inter-personal activities, focusing on an individual's practices, and only the most sophisticated coaching and mentoring successfully relates this to influences of policy or society (at school level or beyond). Coaching and mentoring can generate the sort of professional knowledge which comes from the ground up or from lateral conversations. School

leaders and managers often deal with top down implementation of the latest national agenda. Expertise or dilemmas from the classroom or practitioner conversations can easily be squeezed out in this context. As such, even when coaches or mentors become leaders they may not easily be able to draw on what they learned in that context.

Good coaches and mentors can get pigeon holed (or even pigeon hole themselves) and their talents may not be developed in relation to educational leadership. This may be exacerbated by the issues raised above. We have evidence that some coaches would rather let coaching dwindle than let it fall in to the hands of senior leadership. We also know that if SLT set up coaching programmes they have to work hard to overcome their own tendencies to over-manage it in the direction of the latest school agenda.

So, my questions at this point are framed by a core concern of how we can use the experience of coaching and mentoring for better educational leadership. I believe that coaching and mentoring can provide genuine opportunities for educational

Trust
http://www.ncl.ac.uk/cflat/news/documents/5414_CfT_FINALWeb.pdf
[5] Rachel Lofthouse, David Wright, (2012),"Teacher education lesson observation as boundary crossing",

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development through a focus on pedagogy, learning and learners, colleagues' professional practices, school and curriculum structures, challenges and opportunities for change and improvement and staff and students' wellbeing. I am, however, concerned that the vital link to educational leadership is not secure.

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