Tea for two: mentoring relationships in the transition from FE to HE in PCET Teacher Education

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Abstract

When an established FE lecturer moved into HE Teacher Education for the first time the prospect of the move appeared exciting as well as daunting. With this in mind, an old lecturer and friend was called upon to offer informal mentorship alongside the organisational mentor. This paper provides an insight of the key themes to emerge along this first transition year. The frustrations and joys of the year were recorded using informal notes and audio recordings which were analysed in a qualitative phenomological method in order to get to the heart of the research – the transition of one person into the next stage of their career. The burden of becoming the expert, the value of an informal mentorship arrangement and the strength of a partnership collegiate grouping were examined in light of this. What has emerged from the analysis is two people who can rely on each other to be critical friends but also the value of strong working relationships in a strong partnership group.

Contents

'The nature of teaching about teaching demands skills, expertise and knowledge that cannot simply be taken for granted.'

(Korthagen and Vasalos, 2005:107)

Primary, secondary, post secondary and higher education are distinctive in their expectations and time commitments, yet today we are moving Higher Education (HE) into Further Education (FE) classrooms and expecting the staff there to be equipped to cope with walking out of a FE classroom into a HE classroom for the next lesson. Whether we would expect a primary school teacher to feel equipped with this undertaking in a secondary classroom is questionable and highly unlikely. With little support - the transition for a FE lecturer to a HE lecturer is common. For many undertaking HE in FE it is a baptism of fire which follows the vocational education pathway – of learning on the job with minimal input in a formalised setting. The collaborative financial and educational agreements franchising the colleges to deliver the University teacher education programmes to their local populations require a commitment to resource appropriate teacher development for those working on the programmes. However, responsibility for the support for the teaching staff on such courses resides with both the college and the university.

Research has focused on the role of HE in FE but the person delivering is minimised. However, the two cultures have very distinct personalities (Becher and Trowler, 2001) and the transition from FE lecturer to HE lecturer within the same institution without quantifiable training and support is common. Having a mentor or "critical friend" to support the transition is important for new developing teacher educators as this paper will outline. With this in mind, when one FE teacher moved into the role, delivering a Post Compulsory Education and Training (PCET) Certificate in Education and PGCE course, an informal mentoring relationship was drawn upon for the transition period. The more experienced partner, (the mentor) had previously taught the New Teacher Educator (NTE), many years earlier and was more than more than happy to support. Tea for two synthesised as the mentor and NTE met regularly to discuss the workload, assignments, pedagogy and life in general; however, what emerged was more of a tea party of 10 with each supporting

and developing the other. The actual importance of the mentorship relationship was limited and the transition was the most identifiable feature of the data.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was primarily to support a NTE (new teacher-educator); a teacher-educator being defined as: "training to become a teacher, usually at an institution of higher education" (Collins, 2015), in the transition from being an FE lecturer to an HE lecturer in FE. The research was a bi-product of the support mechanism which enabled us to reflect and act reflexively on the reflections. For this reason we chose a combination of phenomological and ethnographical methodology so that the NTE was at the heart of the research and all data centred on the main actor; the NTE.

> "The purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation. In the human sphere this normally translates into gathering 'deep' information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions and participant observation, and representing it from the perspective of the research participant(s)." (Lester 1999:1).

Two researchers were involved in the process to begin with; the NTE and the mentor, but this soon developed into a community of support and practice which widened the research collection to include the partnership group and Programme Leader from the University concerned. Data was collected through an online survey (Survey Monkey) of eight participants, six of whom are currently teaching HIM and two previous HE lecturers (one of whom is Head of HE in FE, the other being a programme leader of a partnership of HE lecturers in six local colleges) and through discussion (see Appendix). Six of those surveyed had been a teacher trainer for more than five years. The data collected throughout the research is qualitative in nature with in depth analysis of the informal discussions which form the basis of this study. The aim of phenomenology is the return to the concrete, captured by the slogan 'Back to the things themselves!' (Eagleton, 1983:56, Kruger, 1988:28, Moustakas, 1994:26). Primarily the views of the NTE concerned survival and identity, which were joined with the observation and discussion contributions of the mentor. The search for patterns within the informal mentoring discussions

formed the qualitative data, as 87.5% of the survey participants had received informal mentoring in their first year of teaching HE and informal mentoring formed the basis of the research.

> "If there is a general principle involved it is that of minimum structure and maximum depth, in practice constrained by time and opportunities to strike a balance between keeping a focus on the research issues and avoiding undue influence by the researcher. The establishment of a good level of rapport and empathy is critical to gaining depth of information, particularly where investigating issues where the participant has a strong personal stake." (Lester 1999:2)

The mentor was careful to provide support without control of the development of the NTE to avoid as much bias coming through as possible (Groenewald 2004:2). For this reason the data appears to be random and uncontrolled so analysis of the data was crucial. We first read through the notes to gain an understanding of the key themes to emerge, those being the transition from an FE lecturer to an HE lecturer in FE and the efficacy of mentorship in its different forms. We had intended to use ENVIVO software to analyse the discussions but due to timetabling issues we resorted to using post it notes (appendix 2) to categorise and group the key themes that were emerging. (Hycner,1985). The chosen method was simple yet effective at getting to the heart of the transition for one lecturer's move into HE in FE in teacher education. As the research is ethnographic both participants were willing to have their data analysed and included. An ethical consent form was emailed alongside the Survey Monkey questionnaire to obtain consent to share the results of the survey. (Appendix 3)

Literature review

Most teacher education induction literature has traditionally been concerned with those that are from school teachers; however, in more recent times a small amount of post compulsory teacher training literature has emerged including Harkin (2005) and Noel (2006), Thurston (2010) and Exley (2010). The majority of the literature has been written from the perspectives of those employed in University teacher education departments; Thurston (2010) writes from the point of view of a college led teacher education team. Much induction literature assumes that new teacher educators are individuals who have changed jobs to join a University department, in contrast to the NTE in this research, who simply took on another role in her current college. The NTE is arriving in teacher education from a classroom assistant practitioner and trainer background, which is usual, as Noel (2006) indicates many college based teacher educators arrive from a variety of subject specialist backgrounds; she came from a similar background to other college based ITE practitioners.

Teacher educators in the colleges are engaged in a curious balancing act – enjoying professional credibility as subject-specialists within the college, having achieved high status and institutional recognition when selected to teach on the College-based HE programme, but having to carefully manage roles between the university, college managers and the students. Consequently, some teacher-educators may be unwilling to make demands for staff development that could jeopardise their new prestigious (but precarious) Higher Education identities. Such requests might involve concrete resource allocations – requesting time and expenses beyond the minimum stipulated – or, more worryingly, they might be unwilling to acknowledge any personal skills or knowledge needs which could call into question their deployment on the programme as resident experts. Boyd et al (2007) identify how new teacher-educators joining a university department might experience a "possible tension between the managerialist/strategic agenda of the institution or department, and the professional development and interests of the individual"; one can see how this is further compounded

by franchised tutors needing to negotiate between two institutions – college and university – if their development needs are to be addressed.

At the college level, new teacher-educators' introduction to the programme could be viewed as "induction by immersion", during which NTEs are expected to learn through participating in "the normal on-going routines of the department" (Murray, 2006:14). There is an expectation that the local Assistant Programme Leaders based in the colleges will provide the materials and resources that the incoming teacher educators joining the college teams would require. In the colleges, NTEs become familiar with the practices and conventions of the delivery of the PCET PG/Cert Ed programme through team meetings and joint scheme and session planning, supplemented by internal moderation. This 'work-based learning' approach has been accepted as the best way to enable the NTEs to become comfortable and assured in their roles, and such confidence is very important for those College-based teacher-educators who need to interpret the university module and assignment requirements to meet individual students' differing contexts. However, Boyd et al (2008:131) warn of the limitations of "situated learning", cautioning that those designing induction activities must ensure that immersion in work-based learning – during which NTEs might concentrate on the mechanics of delivering the programme – does not simply limit new tutors to a "local and parochial knowledge of teacher education", restricted to "What works here" or "What the University requires". Although new tutors might become part of a 'community of practice' as they make confident progress in their teacher education roles, they may initially be adopting coping strategies as they pass through the "survival" stage towards "proficiency" in their new professional teacher educator identities (Griffiths, 2011). Boyd (2008) argues this approach may divert energies into the transmission of "effective" practices at the expense of engaging more fully with the broader social and moral purposes of higher education.

Jones (2006) supports this and emphasises that scholarly activity is not just about research, it also includes reflecting on teaching practice, pedagogic research and subject based research for increasing knowledge. Further

support is provided by Bradley (1999), and Cristofoli and Watts (2006). Many respondents in a study conducted by Noel et al (2009) concentrated on CPD and teaching activity issues with very little reference made to scholarly activity and subject knowledge. Key reference was made to teaching practice, assessment strategies and procedural differences, some tutors however implied that 'their perception of CPD is different from that to their college' with the reference made to subject specialism and hence scholarly activity.

Young (2002: 276) suggests that a particular barrier to a HE ethos/culture is lecturers' rejection of an academic identity. Britzman (2003) argued that: "…identity is an unstable, contradictory, and unfinalized relation of oneself – identity in teaching is shaped by tensions in the relationship between theory and practice, knowledge and experience, thought and action, technical and existential, objective and subjective" As Johnson (2014) points out, this suggests a contrast to how they see their role in the delivery of the curriculum. Young (2002) further suggests that tutors often feel isolated and not part of an academic community which also reduces this identity; they often do not identify themselves as a HE person but as someone who teaches both, and possibly do not identify with similar individuals across the college, but instead with their own curriculum teams. If HE in FE teachers remain within the confines of their usual colleague team and do not move into a new staff room with new colleagues it is questionable whether the pedagogy and sense of identity has a recourse to change, because the change comes in the form of the students. The sense of identity and belonging to a HE teaching staff then comes from the external Programme Leader and partnership group, which forms a very small amount of the total working time. Whether the students benefit from this is questionable. Britzman (2003) theorized these relationships are not neat dichotomies. Rather, she argued, these tensions are dialogical, meaning "they are shaped as they shape each other in the process of coming to know" (p. 26) through social interaction. Engaging in the dialogical relationship of these tensions fashions the way teachers come to understand their practice and the subjectivity of identity through that practice (Britzman, 2003).

The notion of communities of practice, relationships with immediate colleagues and partnership colleagues' places teacher knowledge and learning as situated within the teacher's own experience; whereby previous experiences facilitate reflection and the transfer of knowledge from one situation to another. One straightforward pathway to assuming a HE identity is not always present with few colleges, including the one in question, not affording a large amount of HE staff contact. Staff remain within their FE collegiate groupings with a small amount of work only in the HE sphere. By engaging in collaboration with colleagues, teachers construct their own knowledge and understanding of practice. Community socialization and practice forms a major part of the identity change; (Wenger,1998) acknowledged the roles of newcomers and old-timers to the professional community of practice. Those who are new to the profession begin their new practice on the periphery. However, they cross the boundary into the inner framework of practice by engaging with experienced individuals. In this way, teacher educators are "shifting [their] perspectives from border crossing to building new communities and from forsaking identities to co-constructing new facets to identity" (Beynon et al., 2004:106) through collaborative structures. Beynon et al. (2004) argued that teacher educators create a new third dimension through their socialization with the practice, rather than relinquishing their previous identity.

What constitutes 'mentoring' is difficult to describe; Roberts (2000) could cite a plethora of articles, research and models but was unable to present an interpretation with any clarity, he summarised that consequences of mentoring: "appear to allow for positive growth, development and self-actualisation" and that mentoring may be "many things to many people", and is clearly a complex, social and psychological activity (Roberts, 2000:163). Shapiro et al (1978) identified a continuum of activity within a range of functions; one of the categories is defined as:

> "Mentor – an intense paternalistic relationship in which an
> individual assumes the role of both teacher and advocate" (ibid, 1978).

Megginson's later definition maintained that a mentor is an "off-line person" who helps another to address major transitions or thresholds and deal with them in a developmental way, or anyone who provides guidance, support,

knowledge and opportunities "for whatever period the mentor and protégé deem this help to be necessary", perhaps indicating that mentors have a shelf life (Megginson,1994:214); in the case of this mentor and mentee, the relationship is a lifelong one.

Any negative aspects of mentorship have been largely unexplored; Starkey (2015) recently discussed his own experiences of mentorship and referred to the 'Pygmalion complex', where mentors may imagine that "they have made you and they own you" and the response of the mentee is to "rebel and break free". Mentorship: "often ends bitterly and is something that needs to be thought of" (Starkey, 2015) and is not always an enriching relationship on both sides. This reflects Merriam's (1983) claim that: "forced matching of mentors and protégés ignores a characteristic crucial to the more intense mentor relationships – that the two people involved are attracted to each other and wish to work together" (Merriam, 1983:171). In a study of experiences of school-based teacher training (Maynard, 2000), students commented that they wanted their class mentor to act as a role model, an effective practitioner who they could emulate; at the same time, they did not want their mentors to 'impose' or dictate students' activities: "Good mentoring is about letting go and letting you explore" (Maynard, 2000:25).

The diversity of human behaviour is reflected in the vast amount of theories and literature researching and analysing it; if it was a simple science we would all be a master of it, and mentoring has a similar tendency (Wood, 1997). Perhaps the most skilled 'experts' do not always make the best mentors, but if organisations "can be transformed through mentors harnessing the fruits of professional development" (Moon et al, 2000:105) mentor roles should not be conceptualised as more informal 'buddying' and attention should be paid to a planned and structured programme.

Analysis

Working in a college, with limited access to other HE colleagues does not engender confidence in one's ability to "meet the standards" (NTE) or provide the best experience for students. On several occasions the NTE was heard to say "I just don't want to let the students down". The mentor was frustrated time and time again at the NTEs lack of confidence in her own ability to provide a good learning experience for her students. Although second marking was undertaken by the mentor and positive feedback on the quality of the feedback provided, the NTE was stuck in a cycle of self doubt. Indeed several "wobbles" as the NTE phrased it happened throughout this first year. Through dialogue and frank discussion these teething obstacles slowly lessened. At times of great uncomfort the mentor played on the friendship model of mentoring to support and say "We have to think about what is best for you" If you feel that you really cant do it now then we have to make that decision but I do think you can do it. Secondary discussions with her line manager resulted in dialogue concerning "I don't feel I can do it but I don't want to let her (the mentor) down" and decisions to continue resulted. As Lubelska and Robbins (1999) point out the movement from teacher to trainer involves utilising the skill of empathy and understanding to help them refine their thinking. These skills were utilised but both parties to confront inconsistencies in thinking. Although frustrating from the mentor's point of view the NTE came through these questioning times and eventually developed an authority and identity that was self developed from struggles. The organisational mentor did not hold the same emotional resonance.

The NTE was eager to meet, observe and share with and learn from colleagues delivering the same programme elsewhere. The monthly partnership meetings and moderation events provided the ideal avenue through which to develop confidence in her own ability. From analysis of discussions over the academic year, a gradual expansion of desirable working relationships with partnership colleagues developed a professional trust in a non-threatening working relationship. Language such as: "He's great – he understands…" began to emerge in contrast to the "I don't know what I'm doing here" from early October. Experienced colleagues felt safe to share

student work with critical friends whereas in the beginning the NTE wanted the mentor to check over work for moderation before the moderation event to avoid… "looking as if I don't know what I'm doing…" As the academic year progressed the fear of not knowing about the subject moved to eagerly requesting support with work that was viewed as borderline. The movement away from a trustworthy moderation buddy to a critical friend in all partners was noted by the mentor whilst the NTE was not consciously aware of this movement. It can be suggested that this showed a much deeper confidence than even the NTE was conscious of.

The burden of the expert

The burden of having to appear to be the expert with assumed infallibility weighed heavily on the NTE and throughout the academic year was evident in discussions. The security of being a specialist in delivering classroom assistant training was in sharp contrast to the insecure feelings of being "the new kid on the block with everyone looking to support me when I'm found out" (NTE). As Exley points out "…parts of a teacher's professional identity may have to change to meet the new, and additional, expectations associated with being a Teacher Educator. One new expectation suggested here is of being an educationalist: of becoming a specialist in education theory, as well as in educational practices." (Exley 2010:2). This movement away from: "…being the one everyone ran to for advice on classroom assistant courses to knowing nothing" weighed heavily on the NTE's mind. Feelings of insecurity were evident in a continuous cycle of movement linked with module changes and feelings of insecurity and external validation from the programme leader, partnership colleagues and the mentor temporarily lifting the NTE before falling again when a new module began. The positive attitude of a Friday morning – post Thursday evening PGCE was in sharp contrast to the Wednesday evening dread and preparation and trying to manage the very real "fight or flight" feelings which culminated in a panic attack one Thursday afternoon. The delight and satisfactions of the teacher educator role sharply contrasted with the vulnerability which the NTE felt at the responsibility of having to be the perfect role model. Wanting to remain perfect in students' eyes meant that when one student asked a question about an assignment

which the NTE did not know the answer to, instead of the usual: 'I don't know but I will find out!', "the whole world fell away from me – I felt like a fraud". This movement from subject specialist to "imposter" (Viczko, 2010:19) was a much more difficult transition than the NTE had anticipated but eventually doubt began to be replaced by a systematic reflection which was carried out through informal discussions and cups of tea with the mentor. Tea and discussions concerning how the mentor had overcome these feelings of doubt in her own transition to HE helped to alleviate some of the worries. However the NTE doubted the mentor saying "I still remember the day I first met you – you came into our class to take over the Literacy Diploma and just sat down on the desk and swung your legs and talked to us. You seemed so relaxed and so full of knowledge". The mentor, full of embarrassment for being remembered in such a way was able to clarify that the trepidation of coming into a course a third of the way was daunting. The mentor had self doubt and feared being compared to those who had taught the previous third. These frank and open discussions developed into the discussion of the "the teacher face and how we all no matter what put on a professional face as we enter the classroom – whatever course we teach or level of the students. We are professionals and the fear is not shared with students. Humans are "pattern-making and pattern-seeking animals" (Starkey, 2015) and the NTE struggled to make sense of the movement from "imposter" to a developing subject specialist in teacher education through these discussions. Between the mentor and mentee we realised that maybe self doubt may never fully disappear but that was not necessarily a bad thing – " it keeps you on your toes – always wanting to know more and to get better at sharing that knowledge" (mentor) Britzman (2003) theorized that mentoring relationships are not neat dichotomies. Rather, she argued, these tensions are dialogical, meaning "they are shaped as they shape each other in the process of coming to know" (p26) through social interaction. The informal discussions helped the NTE come to realise her growth and her identity as movement in action rather than someone who had reached the finish line, an identity has begun to emerge of a dual specialist of both FE and HE teaching. The mentoring relationship will continue to grow and the mentor has already asked the NTE to support in

delivering an autism awareness session which the NTE has a great deal of experience with.

Partnership

With regards to becoming part of the partnership network – when first joining the NTE "took comfort in knowing you were there (the mentor) and you had faith in me – that I could do the job". However, the NTE also felt like a newcomer and as Viczco (2010:19) says she felt in a deficit position of needing help. The potential for mentorship within the College was limited due to time constraints and teaching timetables, leaving the NTE with a disillusioned experience of mentorship. The NTE sought support from the Partnership with support from the mentor: "It made me feel better knowing that you were there and introducing me to the others". As Wenger's theory of periphery engagement purports, just being present in the group was not always comfortable or developmental. The feelings of being a fraudster and waiting to be found out came through again and again in discussions whether it was in providing the best service for students or in moderation and partnership events. It took a good deal of time to move away from reliance on the mentor and the Programme Leader to feeling part of the partnership team. A fully supportive and welcoming team were more than willing to help and support with one saying: "I know how you feel. We've all been there – we just muddle along together". This rather self devaluing statement (coming from an established and highly competent teacher educator) was welcomed and encouraged a relaxation of tensions on the behalf of the NTE. However the constructivist pedagogy, as described by Lambert (1998), enabled her to work with the partnership to "create mutual trust, hear each other, pose questions and look for answers together, and make sense of our common work" (ibid:18). Lave and Wenger (1991) concur with this community of practice being important in developing identity and: "The emotional dimension of professional learning is highly significant" (Eraut, 2004). When the NTE was comfortable and able to share in this community of practice the reliance on the mentor as facilitator and holder of knowledge lessened as an acceptance and sense of belonging developed. "I rang Val last night and I am going in to see her start this new module with her first years". The supportive nature of

the partnership colleagues emotionally provided a sound base of development and collegiality. "The relational character of knowledge and learning, and . . . the concerned nature of learning activity for the people involved" (Lave & Wenger, 1991:33); this knowledge became shared and the partnership took over as colleagues and supporters. Collaboration with the partners in a supportive community of practice began to help form an identity as one of belonging to the HE sector. The movement away from Lave and Wenger's (1991) perspective of newcomers "peripheral experiences" was evident. As Beynon et al, (2004:106) point out the collaborative structure of the strong partnership networking provided a "shifting [in] perspectives from border crossing to building new communities and from forsaking identities to co-constructing new facets to identity". This sense of identity and belonging to a wider group of assistant programme leaders was observed developing over each month with less reliance on the mentor being replaced with reliance on the partnership to a genuinely developing self reliance. Though this is not yet fully established it is developing and is a positive outcome of this first transition year. However, what remains is an issue is the FE contract of those like the NTE who teach partly in FE and partly in HE because the role is not fully HE there is always a feeling of "looking in from the outside twice a week and then going home to the comfort of my other classes for the rest of the week" (NTE) No other member of the partnership is in this position so it was the mentor who could sympathise and offer support in this role for although it is no longer the case, it once was and the realities of this juggling act were discussed in detail and strategies suggested to try to overcome transition from one sector to the next as well as one role to the other.

Mentoring

The one to one discussions were open and frank and sometimes ended with "You know you can do it – you would not be here if you couldn't do it". Each session was different; sometimes focusing on a problem and sometimes examining pedagogy in reflexive examination of reflections on development and progress (Wright, 2009) "…on the other hand, the traditional boundaries between teacher educator and student blurred as we co-constructed meaning

and our identities through these questions." (Viczco, 2010:2). It was co-mentoring not only from the mentor and NTE but also the students and the NTE as she grew in confidence from the confidence they had in her. When the programme leader discussed with the PGCE group plans for the forthcoming year they requested that the NTE remain as their tutor for the second year. When this was passed on to the NTE she was both pleased but also worried "That's great but that means I have to learn a whole new year and not consolidate what I have learned this year"; discussions concerning how well she had done and how the students have faith in her brought mixed emotions which the mentor was able to help partition and allow the NTE to make decisions based on facts rather than fears. The informal discussions proved to be a way of airing frustrations and emotions which allowed the NTE to make objective decisions. (For data collected see appendix 2) This need for informal mentoring was agreed with by partnership colleagues with 87.5% receiving it whilst only 12.5% received formalised mentoring when first beginning in teacher education. This acceptance of the NTE that it was not a bother or an inconvenience to ask for assistance slowly developed with the acknowledgement that others valued this informal assistance as much as she did. This encouraged greater confidence to request support from the wider partnership with invitations to: "Come and see how I do it" from one partner which was eagerly accepted to: "Sit here and I we can work together" from another. With over 62% of the partnership agreeing that informal mentorship was very effective, they put this into action and were more than willing to take the NTE into their circle of critical friends. Moderation proved a valuable avenue for validation of value and identity building which built upon student perceptions of her value as a teacher educator. Her identity as a teacher educator was reinforced with each successful delivery of a session and observation and assessment of a teaching session with her students: "They listen to me as if I am the expert".

What the mentee gained from this informal mentoring relationship has been immeasurable; she has survived her first year of teaching in HE and her first-year student group has requested that she progress with them to year 2. Despite the mentee's half-hearted protests, the Programme Leader suggested that the relationship between the group and her class was one of "mentorship

and trust", gained over the year and perhaps a new, albeit far more experienced lecturer may not have the same relationship, which may possibly impact on student performance and retention. Lubelska and Robbins (1999) describe the attitude change and destabilisation of the teachers who the NTE challenged and developed in her teaching. The NTE had to remain robust in her own position and use her own strengths to be emotionally robust enough to provide a good learning experience for these new teachers. From the mentors perspective this resilience was not always as robust as it could be but self belief did develop. There is a distinct possibility that the positive experience of informal mentorship gained by the mentee has synthesised her practice, since the year 1 students felt that they had, in turn, been positively mentored.

Conclusion

Boyd et al (2006) describe how most teacher educators are recruited due to their teaching expertise. This was the case with the NTE but the majority of the issues of identity and confidence arose from this. The pedagogical expertise in classroom assistant delivery was not immediately self evident in the transfer to teacher educator and the crisis of identity persisted on a weekly basis – walking from a level 3 classroom brimming with confidence into a level 5/6 PGCE classroom full of self doubt and anxiety. However as the informal mentoring of the mentor and then the wider partnership developed, this changed. Critical self reflection and reflexive thinking engaged the NTE in personally developing a confidence in her own ability. Frustrations on both the NTE and the mentor's behalf came and went but the open dialogue of two friends talking through issues and working out strategies together worked to begin developing avenues for development. The NTE felt confident that there was a network of approachable and accessible contacts both in her own college, between partnership colleges and at the university, so that individual and personal concerns and uncertainties could be expressed and actions taken. This emotional journey (Eraut 2004) is fundamental to understanding the NTE's potential for growth. The informal nature of the original mentorship relationship relied on friendship and a belief on behalf of the mentor that this was the right career path; this relied heavily on emotional input to carry the development forward. "I don't want to let you down", to: "I can't let the students down" and then on to: "I just have to get through this year and then I will know I can do it". A sense of worth developed throughout the year, moving from a reliance on the mentor to a working relationship with partners and then a reflexive self analysis. The supportive partnership became increasingly reliable as a source of validation through moderation and development meetings. The '…transition from teacher to Teacher Educator' (Swennen and van der Klink, 2009) continued, particularly noting the additionality of the process as being: 'Not just a change in working conditions and acquiring new skills and new knowledge, but also in the way of thinking about one's own teaching and a change, or at least an expansion, of one's identity as teacher into that of Teacher Educator' (ibid: 99). By drawing upon

known pedagogy and knowledge, a sense of belonging was developed. When examining the quantitative data from the partners 62.5% agreed that they were only partially prepared for the movement from FE to HE by university training and college CPD which was in agreement with the NTE's feelings. Drucker (1989:155) argues that "it is a test of an organisation to make ordinary people perform better than they seem capable of, to bring out whatever strength there is in its members, and to use each person's strength to help all the other members perform." By adding to the CPD on offer in colleges, the University can use the strength of partnership arrangements to develop competent and confident NTEs. Perhaps engaging in further study through an MA or the PG Certificate in HE may help to develop confidence at a greater speed but it is the informal mentoring that has partly changed the confidence levels of this NTE. "In becoming a teacher educator, the identity transformation process involves social interaction in the professional community of instructors and in the instructional community of students" (Viczco, 2010). This research project has enabled the mentee to reflect on her own identity and has identified a need to develop her skills by undertaking further scholarly activity and research. The tea for two scenario developed into a tea party for 10 with all co-mentoring and supporting each other; it could be claimed further that this process has now expanded to include a PGCE group of 15 students, many of whom are in their first year of teaching and the original concept of a two person mentor pairing has clearly developed into a reciprocal relationship of many.

Recommendations

From the research undertaken we would suggest that college and university partnerships should work together to develop and implement a planned and structured programme for NTEs, particularly those experiencing the transition from FE to HE for the first time. Support with developing a sense of identity may be helped by undertaking a formalised qualification such as the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher education. In addition to this the choice of mentor seems to be an important factor in success of the NTE's first year; although it is essential that the NTE has a mentor within the organisation and preferably within the same subject specialism, to be allowed the autonomy to develop mentoring relationships with others who they feel can support them, rather than the mentor imposing their practice onto their mentees would appear to be an important factor. The same could be said for vocational lecturers moving into FE teaching: an organisational mentor would help them with the day to day work, but a critical friend could help them develop their pedagogy even further. In addition, the reciprocal relationship of mentoring can clearly benefit many mentors; research, policy and practice are constantly updating and the mentee's experience, knowledge and possibly innovative practices might refresh those of the mentor who has taught the same subject year on year.

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Pen portrait – mentee

I left school with four 'O' levels and have had a variety of jobs and experiences before entering teacher education: computer helpdesk and customer services in industry and the private sector, as well as sales and hospitality.

I became involved in education when my son (now 17), who has autism, struggled to cope in mainstream school: what began as helping staff with school trips and volunteering progressed to school governorship. I became a primary school teaching assistant, gaining qualifications year on year until achieving a first class Honours Degree. Achieving the PGCE in PCET enabled me to then teach Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools, Level 2/3 and it was when studying the Level 5 Diploma in Teaching Adult Literacy at University that I first met my mentor, who was my teacher. The teacher-student relationship developed into mentorship and the boundaries blurred into friendship over the years as we share many of the same values and beliefs.

As a college lecturer I have taught level 1, 2 and 3 and 4, before obtaining the post of HE lecturer to teach on the PGCE last June.

Dionne and I stayed in touch and were reunited at the University Partnership meetings when I began teaching the PGCE. Unfortunately I struggled with the PGCE and, due to timetabling issues at the College; it was difficult to schedule time with my mentor there.

In desperation, I contacted my friend and mentor and she began to support me over many cups of tea; she could do this effectively as she understands me and my anxieties, as well as the PGCE programme. It was this process that evolved into our research paper.
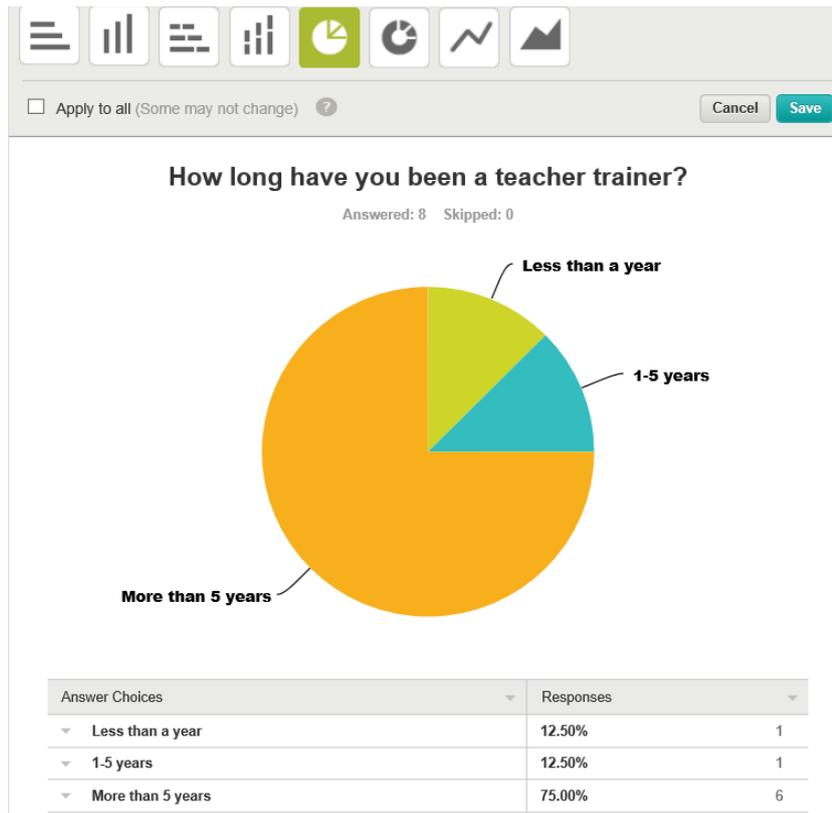

Pen portrait - mentor

Having worked for Northumbria Probation Service I fell into teaching as my client's needs in English lead me spend more time teaching them to read and write than any of the judiciary work I was employed to do. This accident of entering education took me into FE and Basic Skills followed by Skills by Life.

My philosophy of teaching is to develop respect in students for themselves and for the teacher, especially for those for whom education is a difficult task. Having worked for 20 years in the FE sector, with a focus on literacy, I moved into teacher education with the Literary Specialist Diplomas. From there I moved into teaching PGCE PCET within a university with a focus on literacy integration. During my induction into the university I was mentored by a colleague who I co-taught with for the first term before leading the class. With this in mind when I met a mature student who was not enjoying her placement I asked her to come on placement to my workplace in the college where I was still delivering literacy classes. I recognised in her a respect for students and an empathy for those returning to education which meant our philosophies of teaching matched and although the relationship began as a purely mentor mentee one – it developed into a friendship. We have, 5 years later, slipped back into the mentor mentee relationship very easily. When Gillian asked me to provide a reference for her new role as a teacher educator I was more than willing to do this but realised having done it myself that a supportive mentor would help to support her development. I am working with another member of the university team, who is currently informally mentoring me. I value this mentorship greatly and wanted to provide something as supportive for Gillian.

Appendix 2

Appendix

How long have you been a teacher trainer?

Answered: 8   Skipped: 0

Answer Choices		Responses	
▼	Less than a year	12.50%	1
▼	1-5 years	12.50%	1
▼	More than 5 years	75.00%	6

Q2

What previous experiences did you bring to your role as a teacher trainer?

Answered: 8   Skipped: 0

Responses (8)   Text Analysis   My Categories

PRO FEATURE
Use text analysis to search and categorize responses; see frequently-used words and phrases. To use Text Analysis, upgrade to a GOLD or PLATINUM plan.

Upgrade   Learn more »

Categorize as... ▼   Filter by Category ▼   Search responses

Showing 8 responses

Teacher of English and Communications MA in Education development looking at Classroom action research and a couple of publications on action research and researching use of technology in the classroom (TV!)
5/4/2015 6:49 AM   View respondent's answers

trainer in private sector support as a mentor to new teachers
5/1/2015 10:27 PM   View respondent's answers

I have 10 year experience in teaching FE and a background of one to one and group training prior to that.
5/1/2015 9:40 AM   View respondent's answers

10 years in local authority
5/1/2015 9:06 AM   View respondent's answers

Many years of teaching experience
4/30/2015 5:45 PM   View respondent's answers

experience of being an area training manager and recruitment, selection and training/mentoring training staff
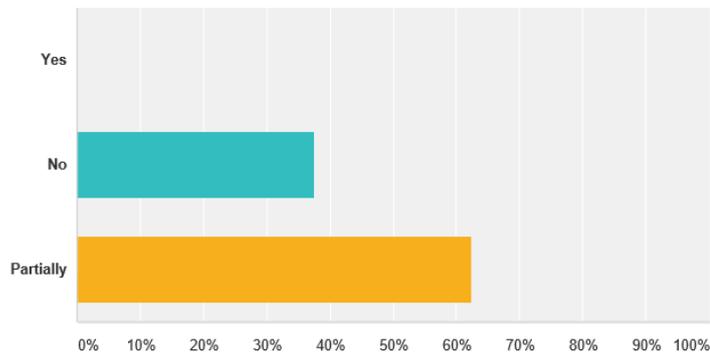4/30/2015 4:22 PM   View respondent's answers

Do you feel you were prepared for your role as a teacher trainer?

Answered: 8   Skipped: 0

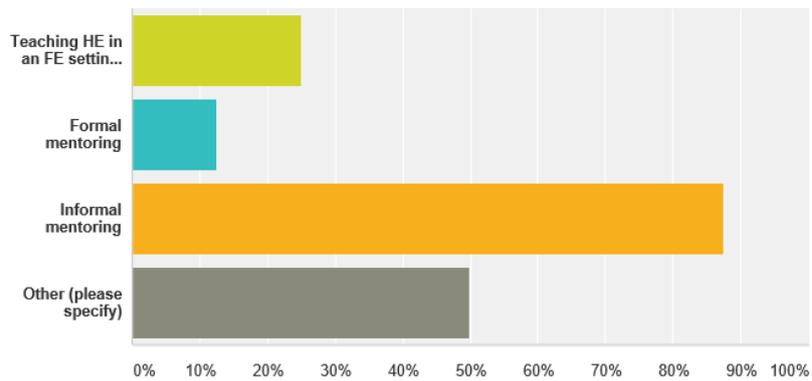| Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	0.00%	0
No	37.50%	3
Partially	62.50%	5
Total		8

Comments (8)

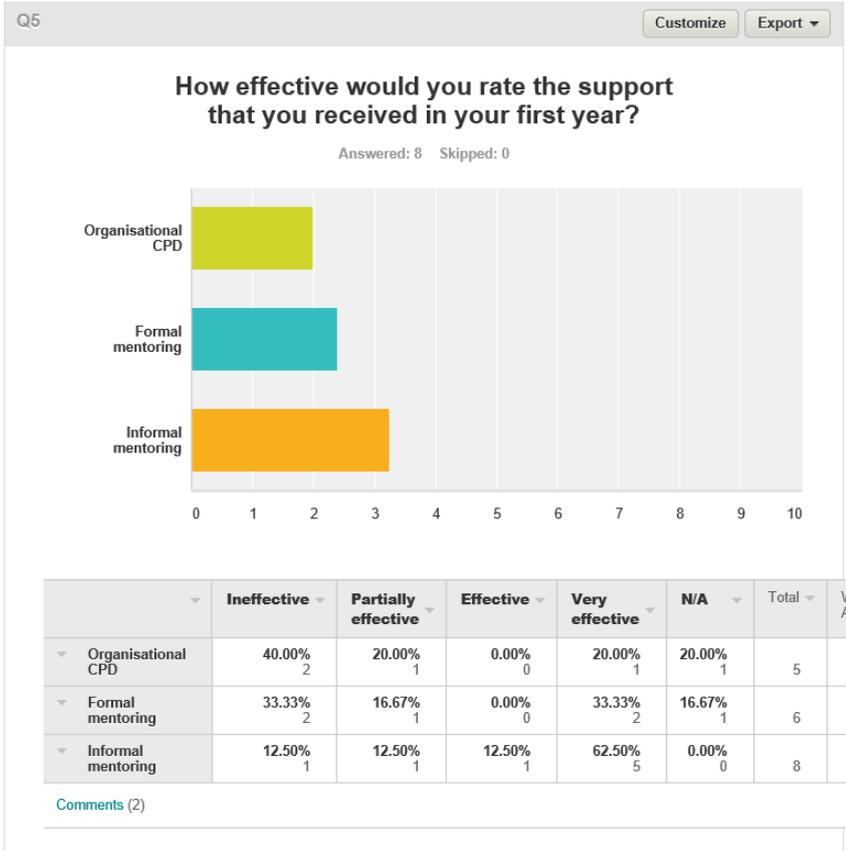## Did you receive any of the following support in your first year of teacher training?

Answered: 8   Skipped: 0

Answer Choices		Responses	
Teaching HE in an FE setting - CPD		25.00%	2
Formal mentoring		12.50%	1
Informal mentoring		87.50%	7
Other (please specify)	Responses	50.00%	4
Total Respondents: 8			

Customize   Export ▾

How effective would you rate the support that you received in your first year?

Answered: 8   Skipped: 0

Organisational CPD
Formal mentoring
Informal mentoring

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

	Ineffective	Partially effective	Effective	Very effective	N/A	Total	Weighted Average
Organisational CPD	40.00% 2	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	20.00% 1	20.00% 1	5	2.
Formal mentoring	33.33% 2	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	33.33% 2	16.67% 1	6	2.
Informal mentoring	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	12.50% 1	62.50% 5	0.00% 0	8	3.

Comments (2)

If you received support, which was the most effective and why?

Answered: 8   Skipped: 0

💬 Responses (8)   ☁ Text Analysis   🏷 My Categories

PRO FEATURE   ⊗
Use text analysis to search and categorize responses; see frequently-used words and phrases. To use Text Analysis, upgrade to a GOLD or PLATINUM plan.

Upgrade   Learn more »

Categorize as... ▾   Filter by Category ▾   Search responses   🔍 ❓

Showing 8 responses

As above - my mentor was superb and I learned everything from him. After a couple of years I reluctantly started working on the Huddersfield Uni Franchise and the support from the Partnership - we were almost antagonistic to the Uni - was very good (still keep in touch now) Partnership taught me what could reasonably be achieved - e.g. "purpose of first TP is to ensure that there's a second TP"
5/4/2015 6:49 AM   View respondent's answers

support from colleagues within the sector, they appreciate the job and able to offer their advice and support
5/1/2015 10:27 PM   View respondent's answers

Speaking to colleagues in the college partnership that were already delivering teaching training and their wealth of experience. They were more than willing to share resources too.
5/1/2015 9:40 AM   View respondent's answers

Informal support in staff room from peers
5/1/2015 9:06 AM   View respondent's answers

Advice & guidance from a more established member of the teacher training team
4/30/2015 5:45 PM   View respondent's answers

1-1 support to reflect on previous practice sharing resources and plans with peers as it can from a pragmatic point of view

Export ▾

34

Q7

Export ▾

What do you think are the 3 most important qualities of an effective teacher trainer mentor?

Answered: 8   Skipped: 0

💬 Responses (8) | ☁ Text Analysis | 🏷 My Categories

PRO FEATURE ⊗
Use text analysis to search and categorize responses; see frequently-used words and phrases. To use Text Analysis, upgrade to a GOLD or PLATINUM plan.

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Categorize as... ▾ | Filter by Category ▾ | Search responses | 🔍 ❓

Showing 8 responses

The capacity to know what to say the capacity to know what not to say The ability to steal mentees and trainees idea and to benefit from their feedback to me We really need to be able to get back to new teacher educators sitting ineach other's classrooms - I think
5/4/2015 6:49 AM   View respondent's answers

listening empathy/support encouragement
5/1/2015 10:27 PM   View respondent's answers

Willingness to: Listen, Share ideas, resources and experiences
5/1/2015 9:40 AM   View respondent's answers

Perseverance dedication and passion for subject
5/1/2015 9:06 AM   View respondent's answers

Experience of teaching at different levels and different types of students Empathy enthusiasm
4/30/2015 5:45 PM   View respondent's answers

Listening patience practical action planning skills
4/30/2015 4:22 PM   View respondent's answers

Experience Quality Universal skills of professional development

---

Q8

Export ▾

Based on your own experiences, do you have any suggestions that might improve the support available to a new teacher trainer?

Answered: 8   Skipped: 0

💬 Responses (8) | ☁ Text Analysis | 🏷 My Categories

PRO FEATURE ⊗
Use text analysis to search and categorize responses; see frequently-used words and phrases. To use Text Analysis, upgrade to a GOLD or PLATINUM plan.

Upgrade   Learn more »

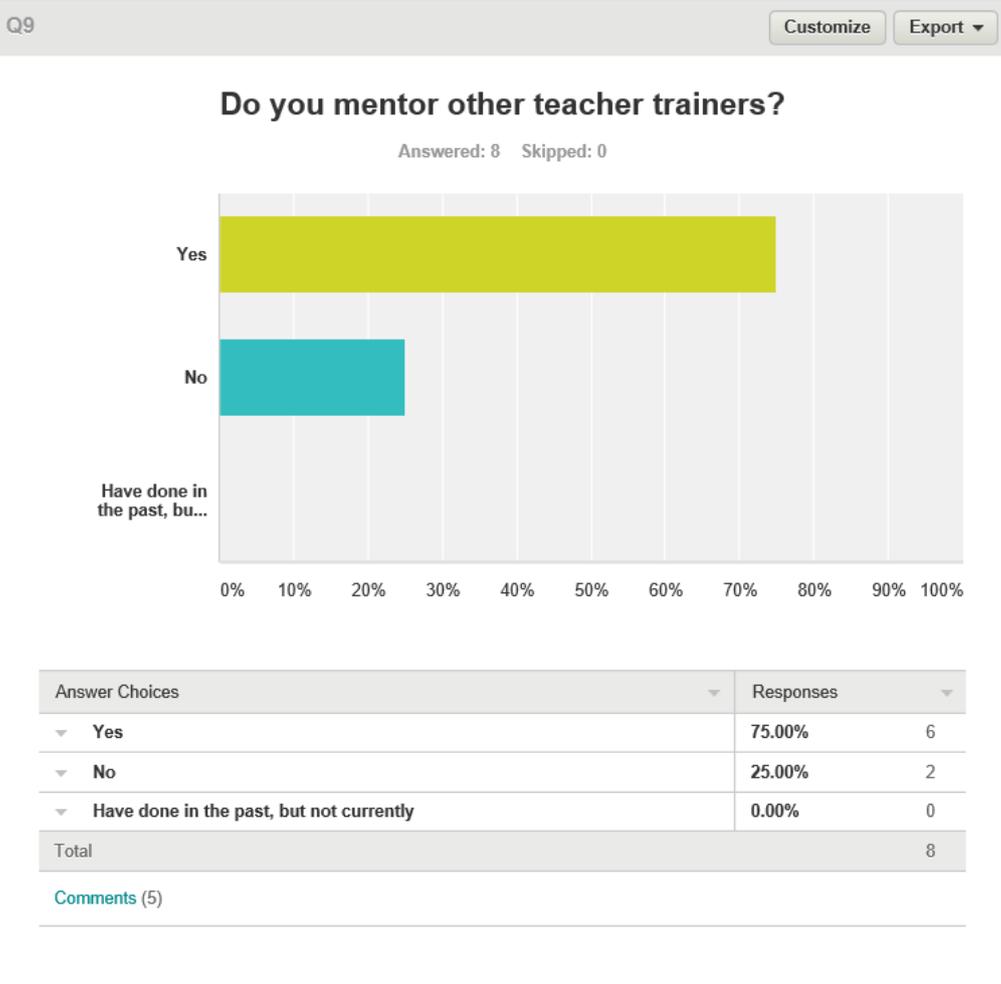Categorize as... ▾ | Filter by Category ▾ | Search responses | 🔍 ❓

Showing 8 responses

organise peer visits - don't call them observations!
5/4/2015 6:49 AM   View respondent's answers

giving time for the mentor to support new teacher trainers
5/1/2015 10:27 PM   View respondent's answers

Further awareness and training for HE managers in FE colleges, so that they understand the challenges that teachers find in the transition from FE to HE
5/1/2015 9:40 AM   View respondent's answers

Have a nqt period on partial time table
5/1/2015 9:06 AM   View respondent's answers

A good mentor
4/30/2015 5:45 PM   View respondent's answers

The university to have a structured programme for new staff that stretches further than induction. Formal mentoring
4/30/2015 4:22 PM   View respondent's answers

Using mentoring videos to reinforce teaching strategies that can be used in the students own practice

Get Started

Feedback

Customize   Export ▾

Do you mentor other teacher trainers?

Answered: 8   Skipped: 0

Answer Choices		Responses	
▼	Yes	75.00%	6
▼	No	25.00%	2
▼	Have done in the past, but not currently	0.00%	0
Total			8

Comments (5)

Q10

Export ▾

Name (if happy to be quoted or contacted)

Answered: 6   Skipped: 2

Answer Choices		Responses	
Name	Responses	100.00%	6
Company	Responses	0.00%	0
Address	Responses	0.00%	0
Address 2	Responses	0.00%	0
City / Town	Responses	0.00%	0
State / Province	Responses	0.00%	0
ZIP / Postal Code	Responses	0.00%	0
Country	Responses	0.00%	0
Email	Responses	83.33%	5
Phone	Responses	0.00%	0

Get Started

ack