

The Open University Partnership in Wales PGCE Programme

Research Bulletin Special Issue April 2023

Welcome to a special issue of the PGCE Programme's research bulletin. Special issues focus on a range of topics of interest to teachers and teacher educators. In this issue mentoring in teacher education is explored.

If you wish to share any research with the wider partnership and/or have suggestions for future special issues please contact Alison Glover (alison.glover@open.ac.uk).

In this special issue on mentoring



The roles of the school-based teacher educator: A longitudinal study identified six roles – host; tour guide to the profession; cheerleader/encourager; planner; instructional advisor and teaching partner.



Mentoring and mentor training: An overview of the co-creation of a replicable and sustainable mentor training curriculum that can be used across school and university contexts.



Tools for school-based mentoring: The contributions and limitations of technological, discursive and epistemic tools /mentoring frameworks to support the mentor-mentee process are examined.



The impact of e-mentoring: Student teachers' ability to analyse lessons was measured through an open-ended assessment of a lesson video before and after an intervention.



Mentoring conversations: Mentoring conversations are valuable for 'making visible' classroom teacher practices and knowledge, which has implications for the professional development of mentors.



Student teachers' well-being and resilience: Helping student teachers develop an understanding of how to support their own wellbeing may further impact the promotion of students' wellbeing and potentially mitigate issues with new teacher attrition rates.



Analysing mentor and mentee roles: Findings indicated that mentors exercise control through an active, direct, and diverse mentor role.



CollectivED: Includes a working paper series that focuses on practice, policy and research on coaching, mentoring and professional development.



TEAN: The Teacher Education Advancement Network has a free online journal that intends to advance research and scholarly activity in teacher education.



The roles of the school-based teacher educator

'School-based teacher educators in the role of host may not always assist teacher candidates in developing relationships with student.'

The partnership between school-based teacher educators and student teachers can operate at various levels and with fluctuating amounts of support. This paper presents the findings from an exploratory case as to how mentors self-identify, this used multiple data sources collected over a period of 56 weeks from 11 teachers and 123 student teachers.

The six roles of the teacher educator that emerged included: host, tour guide to the profession, encourager, planner, instructional advisor, and teaching partner. The various roles school-based teacher educators self-identify and perform are not linear.

School-based teacher educators found themselves performing more than one role, moving fluidly between roles, and felt that the need to “stay” in one or more roles depended upon the needs of their class, themselves, or the student teacher. However, some school-based mentors found it difficult to move beyond the cheerleader/encourager role. It is important for school-based teacher educators to self-identify in the roles as teacher educators so they can recognise where they are, what they are doing, and to what extent they are engaging student teachers in opportunities that allow for participation, engagement, and growth as developing teachers.

Rakes, L., Powell, R.L., Blevins, B. and Giordano, V. (2022) 'Navigating the roles of the school-based Teacher Educator: Mentor teachers' and teacher candidates' perceptions', *The Educational Forum*, doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2022.2053019



Mentoring and mentor training

'A good mentor encourages risk taking and holds high expectations for mentees.'

This paper provides an account of the development of a mentor training programme. The training was developed over the course of a year and involved 32 exemplary mentors as co-creators/participants of five theory to practice modules, with teacher inquiry as an overarching framework. The collected data included reflections, artefacts and end of training surveys.

The attributes of a mentor that appeared across this initial reflection count as some of the project's most significant findings. A set of themes emerged that refer to the traits that a 'good' mentor engages with: provider of emotional support; time to listen, patience, open to new ideas, gives non-judgemental feedback; possesses the knowledge and expertise to guide and scaffold mentee's learning.

Participants' responses highlighted that effective mentoring involves not shying away from difficult conversations. Effective mentors also reflect on their own teaching, mentoring practices and how to facilitate reflection with their mentees. They also know different co-teaching models and when to employ them.

Despite efforts to involve mentors as equal partners in the creation and enactment of the training, mentors struggled to make that identity shift. It is speculated that this may be the most important reform needed - that roles and rewards must be formalised to support the recognition of school-based teacher educators' foundational place in this work.

Parker, A.K., Zenkov, K. and Glaser, H. (2021) 'Preparing school-based Teacher Educators: Mentor teachers' perceptions of mentoring and mentor training, *Peabody Journal of Education*, 96(1), pp. 65-75.



Tools for school-based mentoring

This is a review of literature that explores the types of tools used in mentoring student teachers and their potential impact on student teachers' professional development. Thirty studies were included in the review. A small number of contributions and limitations of each tool are included here.

Technological tools included virtual simulations, video and 'bug in the ear'. For example, using video helps student teachers to reflect and appraise in relation to teaching competencies. However, restricted view of the classroom can be a hindrance. Discursive tools included narratives, focused observation, other guidelines/discussion templates. For example, using a discussion template can direct attention to pupil's learning,

'Only a handful of studies have developed holistic approaches and frameworks related to mentoring.'

but it may be challenging for some mentors to innovate their practice.

Epistemic tools / mentoring frameworks developed to structure the whole mentoring process such as electronic portfolios including those using competencies for structure. These provide a clear plan to assess mentees, but mentors can hold diverse perceptions of mentoring.

The challenge for the field of practice and research is to build on the knowledge, i.e. to contribute to accumulated data and think holistically in the development of mentoring tools, as well as consider contextual dimensions and create thoughtful, holistic mentoring structures.

Nesje, K. and Lejonberg, E. (2021) 'Tools for the school-based mentoring of pre-service teachers: A scoping review', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 111, doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103609



The impact of e-mentoring

E-mentoring emerged as a means of over-coming the obstacle of difficulties in providing face-to-face mentoring. This study involved two mentors working with 12 mathematics teachers who had no more than five years' teaching experience. A face-to-face meeting started the mentoring process, followed by individual interviews to determine professional needs. For six weeks the e-mentoring process was conducted in groups, with the final two weeks on an individual basis.

A key improvement following the intervention was that of elaboration of observations of a recorded lesson – with participants providing causal responses between the teacher's activities and pupil learning, as opposed to a solely descriptive response before the mentoring programme. Also,

'[...] approaches such as e-mentoring in mathematics teaching can be effective for improving teachers' lesson analysis skills.'

afterwards teachers focused on particular teacher-pupil actions as opposed to making abstract comments – links to evidence were made.

The study demonstrated that the presence of a strong interaction between mentor and mentee in e-mentoring practices supports the professional development of novice teachers in terms of lesson analysis skills, taking into account the nature of the teacher and his/her own needs, as well as eliminating the limitations of time and place that may create barriers to face-to-face mentoring. However, in this study, the lesson analysis framework was limited to examining the participants' lesson analysis skills, whether it improves teacher's noticing skills could be investigated.

Güler, M. and Çelik, D. (2022) 'Supporting novice mathematics teachers: The impact of e-mentoring on lesson analysis skills', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 113, doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2022.103658



Mentoring conversations

'Reflection is an important link between how supervising teachers talk about practice and further, how they model it.'

This study applied a multiple case study approach to capture conversations as particular lessons developed and taught by the student teachers were discussed. The purpose of the research was to analyse mentoring conversations in order to make visible supervising teachers' knowledge for mentoring, based on categories evident in the conversations.

An important finding from the study is the value of mentoring conversations for 'making visible' classroom teacher practices and knowledge to the student teacher, which has implications for the professional development of mentor.

Three main categories of conversation occurred in each pair: modellers of practice; supporters of reflection and providers of feedback.

Four of the five mentors adopted a maestro approach to mentoring. Participating teachers typically made explicit suggestions for their preservice teacher's teaching practice, which often eclipsed the need for an extended dialogue with the preservice teacher. In other words, explicit or specific modelling or guidance seemed to forestall the mentoring conversation rather than foster the sorts of collaborative and co-constructed practice that teacher education reforms advocate.

The one mentor who operated a more reflective approach supported the student teacher to consider what could be accomplished in the lesson and focused on student learning, using subtle scaffolding and questioning.

Nielsen, W., Tindall-Ford, S. and Sheridan, L. (2022) 'Mentoring conversations in preservice teacher supervision: knowledge for mentoring in categories of participation', *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 30(1), pp. 38-64.



Student teachers' well-being and resilience

'Understanding the sources of stress and resilience are important in effectively addressing the issue.'

Well-being and resilience of student teachers is a significant concern for their present functioning and for their ongoing engagement in the teaching profession. This study sought to develop baseline descriptors for patterns of resilience and well-being, along with key factors that promoted well-being at a university.

Survey findings aligned with the literature concerning students' perceptions of well-being, reporting the ongoing stresses experienced. Barriers to well-being identified included general anxiety, stress or depression; workload/work-life balance, anxiety about academic performance, anxiety about practice.

Students were generally satisfied with their well-being, although their satisfaction declined as they neared the end of their course. Several stated that learning coping strategies would be helpful in mitigating the workload stress. In terms of supports for well-being, social connections including family, friends and peers were noted as most helpful.

It is critical to protect student teachers' own well-being and to encourage them to develop ways to maintain their positive physical and mental health. Teacher education programmes must provide the programmes, information and services needed for support.

Squires, V., Walker, K. and Spurr, S. (2022) 'Understanding self-perceptions of wellbeing and resilience of preservice teachers', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 118, doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2022.103828



Analysing mentor and mentee roles

This qualitative research project looked at what characterises the mentor role in mentoring dialogue in Norway, and how the different mentor roles influence the mentee role. Ten mentoring recorded dialogues provided the data, each dialogue lasted from 10 to 65 minutes.

Each statement was marked using a range of categories based on the concept of framing (how the communication is controlled between the transmitter and acquirer). For example, the level of directiveness of the mentor, whether they used directive or non-directive skills. Six categories were used for this: giving advice, opinions, information, listening, questioning, and summarising. Mentor's speaking time was also calculated. Whether the mentor was active was recorded – whether they introduced a theme or reacted to a theme introduced to them.

'[...] the mentor is the one who creates the space for the mentee to interact and participate in the communication.'

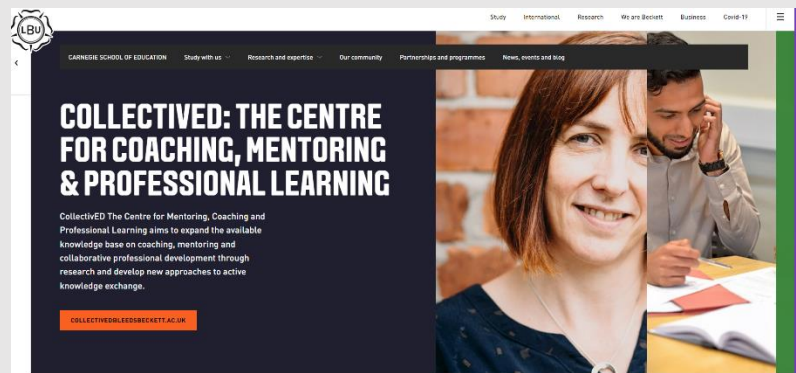
Three groups of dialogues were identified, with mentors exercising control through an active mentor, direct and diverse mentor role, which in turn had given indications of the mentee role. The research focused on the fact that the mentor controls the communication in mentoring and paid less attention in the analysis to the mentee role and how the roles mutually influence each other.

Mentoring education that strengthens the external framing value could delimit the mentors' space to control the communication and thus, undermine their autonomy, whereas mentoring education that maintains the weak external framing value would support the mentors' autonomy.

Merket, M. (2022) 'An analysis of mentor and mentee roles in a pre-service teacher education program: a Norwegian perspective on the future mentor role', *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 30(5), pp. 524-550.

CollectivED

There is a [working paper series](#) that focuses on practice, policy and research on coaching, mentoring and professional development.



TEAN



The [Teacher Education Advancement Network Journal](#) is a free online journal aimed at teacher educators, with the intention of advancing research and scholarly activity in teacher education. The journal is published by the Teacher Education Advancement Network (TEAN) and is designed to be a journal whose contributors offer example and inspiration from their own practice and activity.