

Dilemmas and challenges in mentoring part-time trainee teachers in the Learning and Skills sector

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Aim

To explore

- the dilemmas and challenges
- faced by mentors and mentees
- involved in the implementation of the new system of mentoring of in-service trainee teachers in FE colleges and other providers.

Background - 1

- Before 2007/8 mentors on in-service programmes had a non-assessing role
- 2007-8 revised standards for the Learning & Skills (L&S) Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses introduced
- new requirements for ITE mean that mentors now have a more significant and onerous role

Background - 2

- Mentors have subject pedagogy support role
- Handbook with role specification & tasks
- Mentees chose their own mentor
- Who should be a mentor: preferably not line manager

Data Collection - 1

- 2006, through the rolling programme of mentor training and support sessions
 - made notes of the dilemmas and issues which arose during these sessions
- questionnaire based evaluation of both mentors and mentees

Data Collection - 2

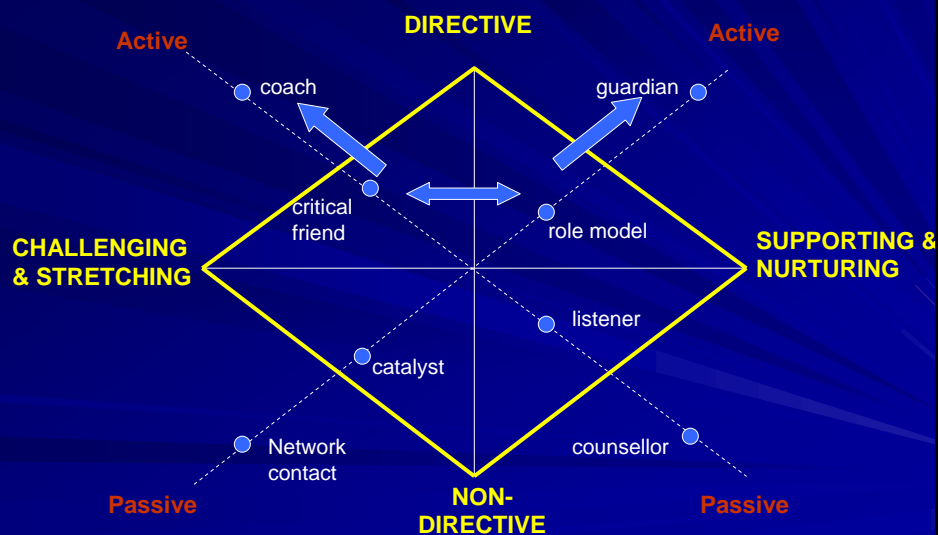
- **Focus groups** Dec 06 - Sept 07
 - 5 centres: Frenchay, Stroud, Gloucestershire, Hartpury and Filton
 - 59 mentors
- **Questionnaires** to mentors
 - 59 questionnaires completed after focus groups
- **Interviews** May 08
 - 4 colleges, 1 training provider
 - 16 mentors, 14 mentees (10 were pairs)

Research methods - issues




- Self-selection of respondents
- Position of interviewer
- Identification of dilemmas
- Intensity of issues

Example of mentoring model: Four basic styles of helping

Adapted from Klasen and Clutterbuck 2002 in Wallace and Gravells 2007 p.14



Where do the dilemmas fit?

- Active and Directive parts of the model
- Dilemmas arise where:
 1. *Critical friend*  *coach*
developmental > assessment
CHALLENGING/STRETCHING + DIRECTIVE
 2. *Role model*  *guardian*
demonstrator of good practice > advocate, protector
SUPPORTING/NURTURING + DIRECTIVE
 3. *Critical friend*  *Role model*
CHALLENGING/STRETCHING v. SUPPORTING/NURTURING

Evidence from the research

Boundary issues:

1. *Critical friend* *coach*

The mentor's perspective

- *Anxiety and guilt about need to be critical of colleague: "daunting"*
- *Ability to write in appropriate language*
- *How to give constructive feedback*
- *Conflict between Ofsted/college judgement and developmental feedback*

The mentee's perspective

- *Guilt and anxiety about taking up "mentor's valuable time"*

Evidence from the research

2. Role model guardian

The mentor's perspective

Guardian conflicts with role:

- *when making pass/fail decisions*
- *giving feedback*
- *doing the paperwork – who should lead?*

The mentee's perspective

- *Mentor too positive – not enough constructive feedback*

Evidence from the research

Tensions:

3. Between critical friend and role model

■ **Critical friend** – *information provider, pedagogical supporter, subject specific adviser, facilitator*

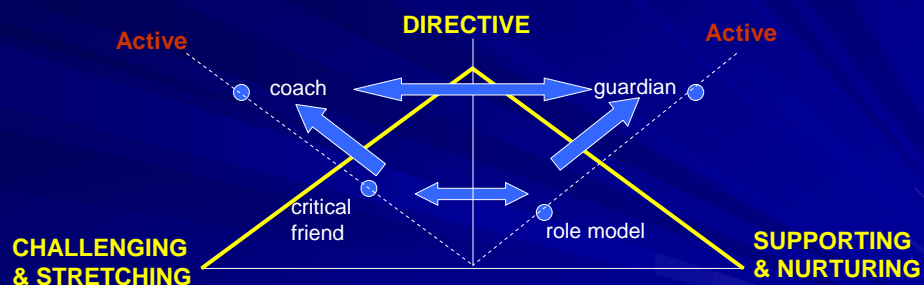


■ **Role model** – *friendship, emotional support, personal development*

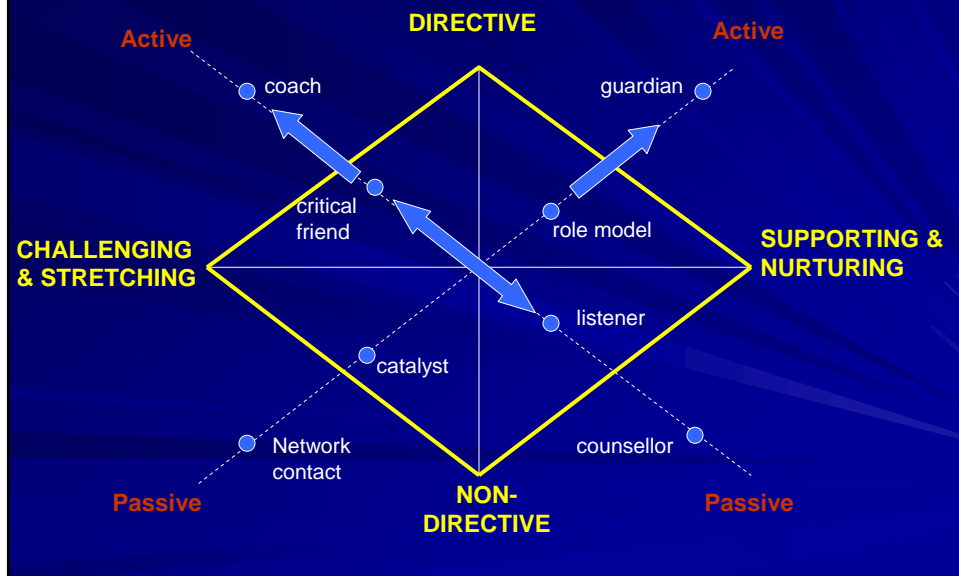
Evidence from the research

- Challenge of making **pass/fail** judgements about a friend and colleague
- **Ethical** issues – who to share judgements with? College management?
- Developmental **feedback** v. summative “*low-stakes and high-stakes assessment*” conflicts (Knight and Trowler 1999:28)
- Significance of **personal relationships**

Location of tensions and boundary issues in Klasen and Clutterbuck model - 1



Location of tensions and boundary issues in Klasen and Clutterbuck model - 2



Other types of mentoring dilemmas identified in research

Practical issues

- Time to carry out the role
- Timetable clashes with mentee
- Paperwork
- Information/communication problems
- Finding suitable place to meet, privacy
- Insufficient support and recognition from college management

Suitability & Choice of mentor

- Suitability – background, training, approach
- Mentee more experienced teacher
- Former role of mentee
- “It’s hard to say no to being a mentor”
- Even more difficult to withdraw from role?
- No alternative mentor available

Conclusions

- **Tensions and boundary issues** at the heart of mentoring in-service trainees produce dilemmas and challenges
- **Tension and boundary issues** between theory based learning cultures and practice based learning cultures
- Wider improvements in the “*architecture for mentoring*” (Cunningham 2005, 2007a)
- **Improvements to UWE mentoring model** for in-service trainees to address these

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