

SW LSRN Conference:  
Changing Identities and "Dual Professionalism"  
in the Learning and Skills Sector  
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'Passionate about teaching'  
- the role of mentors in implementing the new  
professional standards in the learning and skills sector

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## Structure

- *Introductions*
- *policy context*
- *literature around mentoring*
- *emergent findings from research*
- *conclusions*

## Policy context (1)

- *Drive up standards:*  
Ofsted, FENTO, LLUK and SVUK
- *Measurable outcomes*  
(Coffield, 2007, Malcolm & Zukas, 2002)
- School sector reforms have been successful, hence the applicability to FE
- Lack of mandatory teacher education for FE lecturers

## Policy context (2)

- Contested notions of teacher education – process and outcome, fitness for purpose
- Notions of professional practice and identity. Membership of the IFL and its implications
- Prescription versus description in the curriculum
- Subject specificity versus common shared values

## Policy context (3)

- Lecturers work in communities of practice with shared pedagogical assumptions (James and Biesta, 2007)
- *These learning communities are marked by high levels of trust in which participants are prepared to acknowledge, share and learn from mistakes* (Avis 2005)
- Lecturers 'manage' their transitions in different ways - full participation, marginalisation and 'conduct unbecoming' (Colley et al, 2007)



- **SW0705**  
**Disseminating model Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)**
- **SW0708**  
**Disseminate models of good practice in mentor training**

- A Qualitative Research Project -
- Semi-structured interviews in early 2008
  - 10 students/trainees
  - 9 teacher educators
  - 9 managers

## Biographical Learning

a self-willed, 'autopoietic' accomplishment on the part of active subjects, in which they reflexively 'organise' their experience in such a way that they also generate personal coherence, identity, a meaning to their life history and a communicable, socially viable lifeworld perspective for guiding their actions

(Alheit & Dausien 2002)

## What does the literature say?

### AoC & FENTO (2001) Mentoring Towards Excellence

Consultation with "700 learners, 70 teachers and 7 college leaders" in 29 colleges

#### Recommendations:

- Mentoring should be developed and promoted as a supportive and developmental process
- The mentors should have job descriptions that clarify their role
- Mentoring and observation should apply to all teachers: full-time; part-time; supply and agency teachers
- Mentoring should be part of the management's commitment to improving quality and raising standards of teaching and learning.
- Mentors should be best-practice practitioners
- Teaching observations should be used to identify 'grade 1' teachers who are strong role models to become mentors
- Mentors should be formally trained
- Mentors should be either paid for mentoring, or given time to carry out the job
- Mentoring should be used to increase the sharing of good practice
- A mentor needs to be a successful practitioner with strong interpersonal skills.

## What does the literature say?

### Wallace, S. and Gravells, J. (2005) Mentoring in Further Education

*Coaching* generally has a clear developmental agenda, and seeks to achieve certain agreed aims and objectives; so do teaching, instruction and assessment. Helping someone with their emotional needs, without any preconceived idea of the desired outcome, most of us would recognise as *counselling* ... A more directive form of psychological and emotional support may involve the helper offering advice or acting as a role model, taking a younger, less experienced colleague under their wing. This *caring* role is what many people might regard as a common form of mentoring. Finally we have a less directive form of developmental help than coaching, here called *facilitating*, but which could equally be called *networking*.

## What does the literature say?

### **Keeley-Browne, L. (2007) Training to Teach in the Learning & Skills Sector**

- As part of your training you will be allocated to a mentor, or learning coach, who will advise you on the general skills of training to teach (*sic*). Your mentor will be skilled in what is called the pedagogy of the classroom. You will also be given access to a subject specialist coach (this may be the same person as your mentor/learning coach) who will help you develop the skills that are specific to your areas of the curriculum.

## What does the literature say?

### **Keeley-Browne, L. (2007) Training to Teach in the Learning & Skills Sector**

The mentor should:

- help to induct you into the teaching area and institution
- provide a varied and appropriate programme of developmental experiences for you
- observe, evaluate and review your work, providing you with feedback designed to help you improve
- liaise with others involved in your training



## Summary Finding of Survey

The current system of FE teacher training does not provide a satisfactory foundation of professional development for FE teachers at the start of their careers.

While the tuition that trainees receive on the taught elements of their courses is generally good, few opportunities are provided for trainees to learn how to teach their specialist subjects, and there is a lack of systematic mentoring and support in the workplace.

**OfSTED (2003) The initial training of further education teachers.**

## DfES Standards Unit (2004) Equipping our Teachers for the Future

### Para 3.6

- mentoring of teachers in the workplace:

an essential aim of the training is that teachers should have the skills of teaching in their own specialist or curriculum area ... Subject specific skills must be acquired in the teachers' workplace and from vocational or academic experience. Mentoring, either by line managers, subject experts or experienced teachers in related curriculum areas, is essential.

## *What implications?*

### *What does mentoring mean?*

#### *Pre-OfSTED:*

- Formative
- Supportive through transitions
- Focussed on personal and professional development
- Suitable for all
- Emphasis on networks
- Led by mentee

#### *Post-OfSTED:*

- Summative
- Concerned with standards
- Focussed on performance
- Mainly for trainees
- Emphasis on individuals
- Led by mentor

## *What are we finding? Managers on Mentors*

### *Manager A (female in 50s)*

- *[T]he first issue [is] whether or not the person who actually mentors you is from the same specialist area. But does that matter? I mean my feelings, my take on mentoring, is very much that a mentor can only be effective ... if there's a healthy communication between the two.*
- *[A] coach is one who says you know maybe, "This is how it, this is how it ought to be done, you know, give it a try and see," or you know, in that sort of context. Whereas a mentor is someone who says, "Well how do you think you will best achieve that?"*

## *What are we finding? Managers on Mentors*

### *Manager B (male in 60s)*

- *the new standards have made absolutely clear that [pause] to reach a professional level of teaching one's own subject and mediating one's own subject for learning is an important strand ... (a process) supported by a proper mentoring system, struck one as both overdue and very necessary.*
- *They had a number of things they had to do including informal classroom observation, being available to the mentee, make sure that they were comfortable in their subjects with the professionalism, make sure they got the development opportunities as they needed and the quid pro quo was the person doing the mentoring would be remitted for twenty, twenty-eight, twenty-five hours of their eventual time.*
- *(Staff in post for several years) understand their subject very well... better than actually sometimes they understand teaching and learning.*

## *What are we finding? Managers on Mentors*

### *Manager C (female in 50s)*

- *going back to the mentoring, yep you need a buddy. You need that colleague; you need somebody who can say, 'Well, that was rubbish wasn't it?' You say, 'Yea it was rubbish!' You also need someone to keep you going if, you know, to jolly you along and say, 'Oh, keep, you know, nearly half-term!' sort of thing. Yes you need the professional standards, we need somebody who's going to make a judgement on you and that's my line-manager.*

## *What are we finding?*

### *Managers on Advanced Teachers*

#### *Manager A (female in 50s)*

- *"Our best practitioners teaching on our teacher training courses!" and, do you know, they hated it. They absolutely hated it and it, it was, it was a big surprise to me.... They weren't there to simply demonstrate how good they are at teaching science or hairdressing or history ... their core subjects, they were there to teach this other curriculum.*

## *What are we finding?*

### *Managers on Advanced Teachers*

#### *Manager B (male in 60s)*

- *[Advanced Teachers] are expected, and it's part of the interview process, expected to become teacher educators.... We want an [AT] to be able to generalise their own experiences of being expert at their subject, to be able to take it to others in development sessions, in mentoring, in observations across the college and in working with the, with the teacher education team.*

## *What are we finding? Students on Mentors*

### *Student A (male in 40s)*

- *Whenever I've coached or mentored people I've always gone deep, let them get to point where they don't know something, they're not sure of something, a contradiction or, you know, ignorance, "I don't know what you're talking about." "Stop, make a note, that's your objective for the next one. I want to know what that means and you're going to explain it to me and you have a week to do so. Okay? Right, do you want to carry on or do you want to stop?"*

## *What are we finding? Students on Mentors*

### *Student B (male in 20s)*

- *Well, they've got to be accessible. If you've got a mentor that you can't get hold of it's a very difficult thing. So I'm guessing to be nice but to be honest and straight down the line so you know what you're expected, obviously they can't be a scary person because you wouldn't feel comfortable... it's got to be straight down the line and honest... I guess that the biggest thing that I'd have to say from [tutor name] is that she's really, really passionate about teaching and I'm guessing that a mentor has to be passionate about what they do.*

## What conclusions?

- *Competing views on the practicality and desirability of subject-specific mentoring*
- *Mentoring within organisations is situated within other systems that fulfil similar functions*
- *Contested notions of 'subject' and 'subject specialist'*
  - *someone with a higher qualification?*
  - *someone to advise on course organisation?*
  - *someone to induct into practices and traditions?*
  - *Is it the subject that matters or students' ability to engage with the subject?*
  - *Is the priority for the trainee to become part of a particular community of practice?*
- *Reconciling the developmental aspirations of mentoring schemes with the judgemental requirements of inspection*

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